

MEDITATIONS

A N D

CONTEMPLATIONS.

In TWO VOLUMES.

CONTAINING,

VOL. I.	VOL. II.
MEDITATIONS among the TOMBS; And	CONTEMPLATIONS on the NIGHT; And
REFLECTIONS on a FLOWER- GARDEN.	CONTEMPLATIONS on the STARRY HEAVENS.

By JAMES HERVEY, A. B.

Late of Lincoln-College, Oxford.

The TWENTY-FIRST EDITION.

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T O
P A U L O R C H A R D,
O F

STOKE-ABBAY, IN DEVONSHIRE, Esq.

DEAR SIR,

AS your honoured father was pleased to make choice of me, to answer in your name at the font, and to exercise a sort of guardianship over your spiritual interests; permit me by putting these little treatises into your hand, to fulfil some part of that solemn obligation.

GRATITUDE for many signal Favours, and a conscientious regard to my sacred engagements, have long ago inspired my breast with the warmest wishes, both for your true dignity, and real happiness. Nor can I think of a more endearing, or a more effectual way, of advancing either the one or the other, than to set before you a sketch of your excellent father's character. ——— Illustrious examples are the most winning incitements to virtue: and none can come to attend with such particular commendations to you, as the pattern of that worthy person, from whom, under a gracious God, you derive your very being.

A MOST cordial and reverential esteem for the divine word was one of his remarkable qualities. Those oracles of heaven were his principal delights, and his inseparable companions. Your gardens, your solitary walks, and the hedges of your fields,
can

can witness with what an unwearied assiduity he exercised himself in the law of the Lord. From hence he fetched his maxims of wisdom, and formed his judgment of things. The sacred precepts were the model of his manners, and the guide of his life; while the precious promises were the joy of his heart, and his portion for ever.

IMPROVING company was another of his most relishing pleasures. Few gentlemen were better furnished, either with richness of fancy, or copiousness of expression, to bear a shining part in conversation. With these talents he always endeavoured to give some useful, and generally some religious, turn to the discourse. Nor did he ever reflect, with greater complacency, on his social hours, than when they tended to glorify the eternal majesty, and to awaken in himself and others a more lively spirit of devotion.

To project for the good of others, was his frequent study; and to carry those benevolent contrivances into execution, his favourite employ. When visited by the young persons of the neighbourhood, far from taking an ungrateful pride to initiate them in debauchery, or confirm them in a riotous Habit; it was his incessant aim, by finely-adapted persuasives, to encourage them in industry, and establish them in a course of sobriety; to guard them against the allurements of vice, and animate them with the principles of piety. A noble kind of hospitality this! which will probably transmit its beneficial influence to their earthly possessions, to their future families, and even to their everlasting state.

A CONVICTION of human indigence, and a thorough persuasion of the divine All-sufficiency, induced him to be frequent in prayer. To prostrate himself, in profound adoration, before that infinitely exalted being, who dwells in light inaccessible,

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ble, was his glory ; to implore the continuance of the almighty favour, and the increase of all christian graces, was his gain. In those moments, no doubt, he remembered you, sir, with a particular earnestness ; and lodged many an ardent petition in the court of heaven, for his infant son. Cease not to second them with your own devout supplications, that they may descend upon your head, “ in the “fulness of the blessings of the gospel of peace.”

To give their genuine lustre to all his other endowments, he was careful to maintain an humble mind. Though his friends might admire his superior abilities, or his acquaintance applaud his exemplary behaviour, he saw how far he fell short of the mark of his high calling : saw, and lamented his defects : saw, and renounced himself ; relying, for final acceptance, and endless felicity, on a better righteousness than his own : even on the transcendently perfect righteousness, and inconceivably precious death of Jesus the Redeemer. This was the rock of his hope, and the very crown of his rejoicing.

THESE, sir, are some of the distinguished characteristics of your deceased parent. And, as you had the misfortune to lose so valuable a relative, before you were capable of forming any acquaintance with his person, I flatter myself, you will the more attentively observe his picture, this his moral picture ; designed, not to be set in gold, or sparkle in enamel, but to breathe in your spirit, and to live in all your conduct, — Which, though it be intirely your own, calculated purely for yourself, may possibly (like the family pieces in your parlour, that glance an eye upon as many as enter the room, make some pleasing and useful impressions on every beholder — May every one, charmed with the beautiful image, catch its resemblance ; and each, in his respective sphere, “ go and do likewise !”

BUT

BUT you, sir, are peculiarly concerned to copy the amiable original. As the order of an indulgent providence has made you heir of the affluent circumstances; let not a gay and thoughtless inadvertence cut you off from the richer inheritance, of these noble qualifications.—These will be your security, amidst all the glittering dangers; which are inseparable from blooming years, and an elevated situation in life. These are your path, your sure and only path, to true greatness, and solid happiness. —Tread in these steps, and you cannot fail of being the darling of your friends, and the favourite of heaven. Tread in these steps, and you will give inexpressible joy to one of the best of mothers; you will become an extensive blessing to your fellow-creatures; and which, after such most engaging motives, is scarce worthy to be mentioned, you will be the delight, the honour, and the boast of,

Dear Sir,

Your most affectionate Godfather,

And faithful Humble Servant,

Weston Favell, near
Northampton,
July 14, 1747.

JAMES HERVEY.

P R E F A C E.

WE have already exercised our speculations, on the Tombs, and Flowers; surveying nature, covered with the deepest horrors, and arrayed in the richest beauties. Allegory taught many of the objects, to speak the language of virtue; while imagination lent her colouring, to give the lessons an engaging air.—And this, with a view of imitating that divine instructor; who commissioned the lily*, in her silver suit, to remonstrate in the ear of unbelieving reason: who sent his disciples (men ordained to teach the universe) to learn maxims of the last importance, from the most insignificant birds*, that wander through the paths of the air; from the very meanest herbs*, that are scattered over the face of the ground.

Imboldened by the kind acceptance of the preceding sketches, I beg leave to confide in the same benevolence of taste, for the protection and support of the two remaining essays; which exhibit a prospect of still life, and grand operation; which moralize on the most composed and most magnificent appearances of things †.—In which
fancy

* * * Mat. vi. 26, 28, 29, 30.

† Celebrated writers, as Demosthenes and Cicero, Thucydides and Livy, are observed to have a style peculiar to themselves—Now, whoever considers the discourses of Christ, will find a style by which he remarkably distinguishes himself, and which may properly be called HIS OWN. Majestic, yet familiar; happily
uniting

P R E F A C E.

fancy is again suffered to introduce her imagery; but only as the handmaid of truth: in order to dress her person, and display her charms; to engage the attention, and win the love, even of the gay, and of the fashionable. Which is more likely to be effected, by forming agreeable pictures of nature, and deriving instructive observations; than by the laborious method of long-deduced arguments, or close-connected reasonings.—The contemplation of the heavens and the earth, of their admirable properties, and beneficial changes, has

uniting dignity with condescension; it consists, in teaching his followers the sublimest truths, by spiritualizing on the most common occurrences: which besides its being level to the lowest apprehensions; and admirably adapted to steal into the most inattentive heart; is accompanied with this very singular advantage, That it turns even the sphere of business into a school of instruction; and renders the most ordinary objects a set of monitors, ever soliciting our regard, because ever present to our senses.—So that, I believe, it may be said of this amiable method, in which our LORD conveyed, as well as of that powerful Energy, which attended his doctrines; that “never Man speak like this Man.”—The harvest approaching, He reminds his Disciples of a far more important harvest, John iv. 35. Mat. xiii. 39. when immortal beings shall be reaped from the grave, and gathered in from all the quarters of the earth; when every human creature shall sustain the character of valuable wheat, or despicable tares; and accordingly be lodged in mansions of everlasting security, or consigned over to the rage of unquenchable fire.—In his charge to Fishermen, when they are commencing preachers, Mat. iv. 19. He exhorts them conformably to the nature of their late occupation, to use the same assiduity and address in winning souls, as they were wont to exercise in catching the finny prey.—But, for a future illustration of this no less useful than curious subject, I would refer my reader to a most valuable note, in Sir Isaac Newton’s Observations on the Prophecies; p. 148. 4to edition.

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has always afforded the most exalted gratification to the human mind. In compliance with this prevailing taste, I have drawn my serious admonitions from the stupendous theatre, and variegated scenery, of the universe. That the reader may learn his duty, from his very pleasure :—may gather wisdom, mingled with virtue, from the most refined entertainments, and noblest delight.

The evening, drawing her fables over the world, and gently darkening into night, is a season peculiarly proper for sedate consideration. All circumstances concur, to hush our passions, and sooth our cares ; to tempt our steps abroad, and prompt our thoughts to serious reflection.

————— Then is the Time,
For those, whom Wisdom, and whom Nature
charm,
To steal themselves from the degen'rate Croud,
And soar above this little Scene of Things ;
To tread low-thoughted Vice beneath their Feet ;
To sooth the throbbing Passions into Peace ;
And woo lone Quiet in her silent Walks †.

The favour I would solicit for the first of the following compositions, is, that it may be permitted to attend, in such retired and contemplative excursions. To attend, if not under the character of a friend ; at least, in the humble capacity of a servant, or a page :—as a servant, to open the door of Meditation, and remove every impediment to those best exercises of the mind ; which blend advantage with amusement, and improve, while they delight :—as a page, to gather up the unstable, fluctuating grain of fancy ; and collect her fickle powers into a consistent, regular, and useful habit of thinking.

The

† Thomf. Autumn, l. 874, last edit. 12mo.

P R E F A C E.

The other, conversant among the starry regions, would lead the imagination through those beautiful tracts of unclouded azure; and point out to the judgment some of those astonishing particulars, which so eminently signalize the celestial worlds. A prospect this, to which curiosity attracts our eyes, and to which scripture itself often directs our study. A prospect, of all others, most excellently calculated, to enlarge the soul, and ennoble its conceptions;—to give the highest apprehensions of the everlasting GOD, and create sentiments of becoming superiority, with relation to all transitory interests;—in a word, to furnish faith with the firmest foundation, for a steady assiance, and true magnanimity of spirit; to afford piety the strongest motive, both for a lively gratitude, and profound veneration.

While Galilæo lifts his tube, and discovers the prodigious magnitude of those radiant orbs;—while Newton measures their amazing distances, and unites the whole system, in harmonious order, by the subtle influences of attraction:—I would only, like the herald before that illustrious Hebrew†, proclaim at every turn, “Bow the knee, and
“adore the almighty maker; magnify his eternal
“name, and make his praise, like all his works, to
“be glorious.”

† Gen. xli. 43.

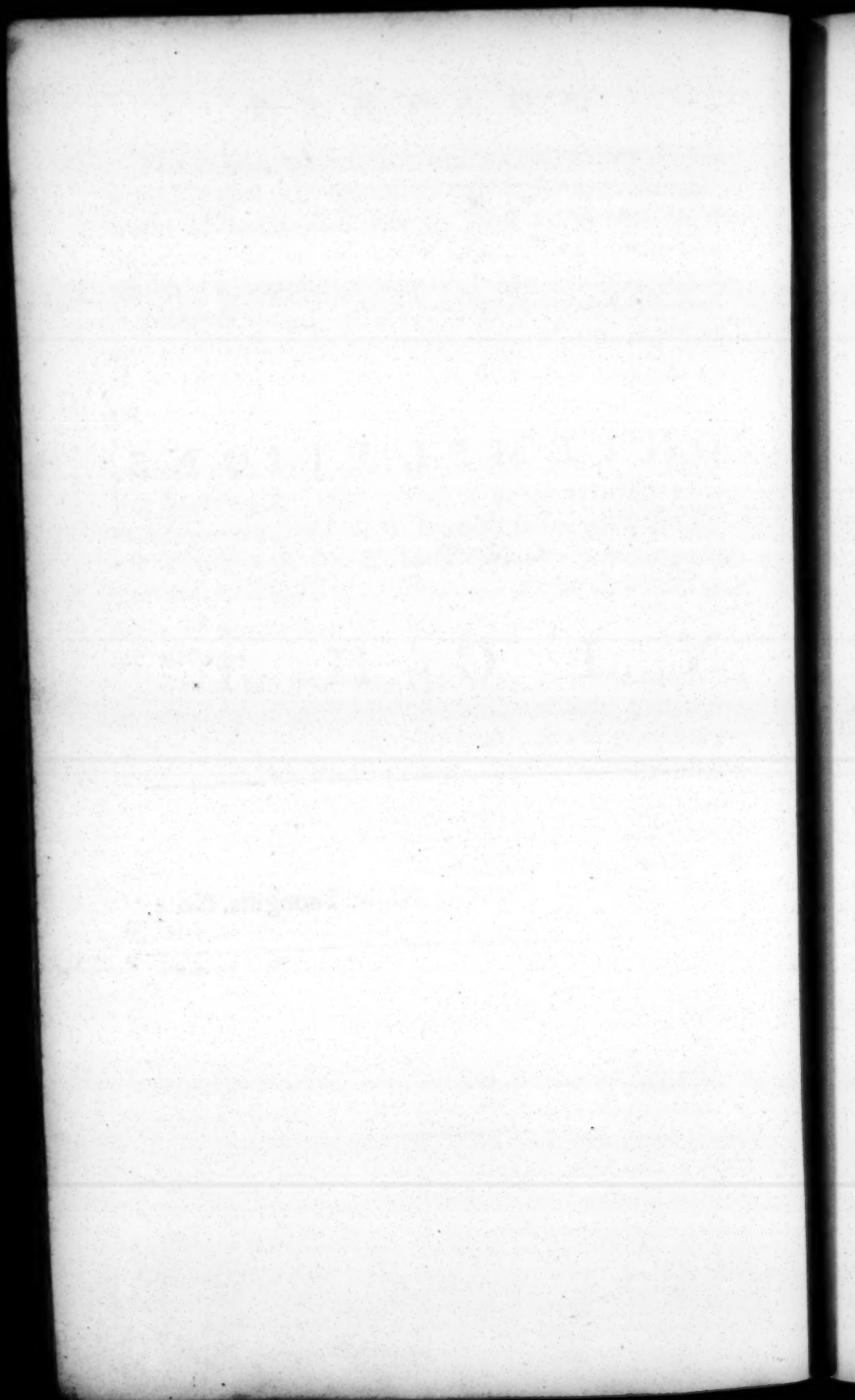


CON-

CONTEMPLATIONS
ON THE
N I G H T.

*Night is fair Virtue's immemorial friend ;
The conscious Moon through every distant age,
Has held a lamp to Wisdom.*

Night Thoughts, No. 5.



C O N T E N T S

O F T H E

CONTEMPLATIONS ON THE NIGHT.

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N. B. It may seem unaccountable to an *unlearned* reader, that astronomers should speak such *amazing* things ; and speak them with such an air of *assurance* ; concerning the distances and magnitude, the motions and relations, of the heavenly bodies. But the *exactness*, with which ECLIPSES are calculated ; the instant of their *beginning* and time of their *continuance*, assigned ; assigned, almost to the *nicety* of a moment, and what is still more surprising, for the space of *hundreds* or *thousands* of years to come :—As this is a matter of fact, absolutely indisputable ; it is also very obvious, yet solid *demonstration*, that the principles of science, on which those calculations proceed, are not mere conjecture or precarious supposition only ; but have a *real*, a *certain* foundation, in the nature and constitution of things.

CONTEMPLATIONS

ON THE

N I G H T.

THE business of the day dispatched, and the sultry heats abated, invited me to the recreation of a walk : a walk, in one of the finest recesses of the country ; and in one of the most pleasant evenings, which the summer-season produced.

THE limes and elms, uniting their branches over my head, formed a verdant canopy, and cast a most refreshing shade. Under my feet lay a carpet of nature's velvet ; grass intermingled with moss, and embroidered with flowers. Jessamines, in conjunction with woodbines, twined around the trees ; displaying their artless beauties to the eye, and diffusing their delicious sweets through the air. On either side, the boughs, rounded into a set of regular arches, opened a view into the distant fields, and presented me with a prospect of the bending skies. The little birds, all joyous and grateful for the favours of the light, were paying their acknowledgments in the tribute of harmony, and soothing themselves to rest with songs. While a French-horn, from a neighbouring seat, sent its melodious accents,

accents, softened by the length of their passage, to compleat the concert of the grove.

ROVING in this most agreeable manner, my thoughts were exercised on a subject, more delightful than the season, or the scene. I mean, our late signal victory, over the united forces of intestine treason and foreign invasion. A victory, which pours joy through the present age, and will transmit its influence to generations yet unborn.—

Are not all the blessings, which can endear society or render life itself desirable, centred in our present happy constitution, and auspicious government? and were they not all struck at, by that impious and horrid blow, meditated at Rome, levelled by France, and seconded by factious spirits at home? Who then can be sufficiently thankful, for the gracious interposition of Providence? which has not only averted the impending ruin, but turned it, with aggravated confusion, on the authors of our troubles?

METHINKS, every thing valuable, which I possess; every thing charming, which I behold; conspire to enhance this ever-memorable event. To this it is owing, that I can ramble unmolested along the vale of private life, and taste all the innocent satisfactions of a contemplative retirement. Had rebellion * succeeded in her detestable designs; instead of walking with security and complacency in these flowery paths, I might have met the assassin with his dagger: or have been obliged to provide for my safety, by abandoning my habitation.— Farewel then, ye fragrant shades; seats of meditation, and calm repose! I should have been driven
from

* Referring to the Rebellion, set on foot in the year 1745.——which, for several months, made a very alarming Progress in the North——but was happily extinguished by the glorious and decisive victory at Culloden.

from your loved retreats, to make way for some insulting victor.—Farewel then, ye pleasing toils, and wholesome amusements of my rural hours! I should no more have reared the tender flower to the sun; no more have taught the espalier to expand her boughs; nor have fetched, any longer, from my kitchen-garden, the purest supplies of health.

HAD rebellion succeeded in her detestable designs; instead of being regaled with the music of the woods, I might have been alarmed with the sound of the trumpet, and all the thunder of war. Instead of being entertained with this beautiful landscape, I might have beheld our houses ransacked, and our villages plundered; I might have beheld our fenced cities encompassed with armies, and our fruitful fields “cloathed with desolation, or have been shocked with the still more frightful images, of “Garments rolled in blood,” and of a ruffian’s blade reeking from a brother’s heart. Instead of Peace, with her charming olives, sheltering our abodes; instead of Justice, with her impartial scale securing our goods; Persecution had brandished her sword, and Slavery clanked her chains.

NOR are these miseries imaginary only, or the creatures of a groundless panic. There are in a neighbouring kingdom, who very lately experienced them in all their rigour †. And, if the malignant spirit of popery had forced itself into our church; if an abjured Pretender had cut his way to our throne; we could have no reason to expect a mitigation of their severity, on our behalf.—But supposing the tender mercies of a bigotted usurper, to have been somewhat less cruel; yet where, alas! would have been the encouragement, to cultivate

† See a pamphlet intitled, An Historical Memorial of the most remarkable proceedings against the Protestants in France, from the Year 1744 to 1751.

vate our little portion ; or what pleasure could arise from an improved spot ; if both the one and the other lay, every moment, at the mercy of lawless power ? This imbittering circumstance would spoil their relish ; and by rendering them a precarious, would render them a joyless acquisition.——In vain might the vine spread her purple clusters ; in vain, be lavish of her generous juices ; if tyranny, like a ravenous harpy, should be always hovering over the bowl, and ready to snatch it from the lip of industry.

LIBERTY, that dearest of names ; and property, that best of charters ; give an additional, an inexpressible charm, to every delightful object,——see, how the declining sun has beautified the western clouds ; has arrayed them in crimson, and skirted them with gold. Such a refinement of our domestic bliss, is property ; such an improvement of our public privileges, is liberty.——When the lamp of day shall intirely withdraw his beams, there will still remain the same collection of floating vapours ; but O ! how changed, how gloomy ! The Carnation blushes no more ; the golden edgings are gone ; and all the lovely things are lost, in a leaden-coloured lowering sadness. Such would be the aspect, of all these scenes of beauty ; all these abodes of pleasure ; if exposed continually to the caprice of arbitrary sway, or held in a state of abject and cringing dependance.

THE light of heaven, has almost finished his daily race, and hastens to the goal. He descends lower and lower ; till his chariot-wheels seem to hover on the utmost verge of day. And, what is somewhat remarkable, his orb, upon the point of setting, grows broader : the shadows, just before they are lost in undistinguished darkness, are surprisingly lengthened *.——Like blessings, little
prized,

* *Majoresque cadunt altis de Montibus Umbræ.*

prized, while possessed; but highly esteemed, the very instant they are preparing for their flight; bitterly regretted, when once they are gone, and to be seen no more.

THE radiant globe is, now, half-immersed beneath the dusky earth. He is taking his leave of our hemisphere, and gilds the plains with a languid lustre.—But, could I view the sea, at this juncture, it would yield a most amusing and curious spectacle. The rays, striking horizontally on the liquid element, give it the appearance of floating glass; or, reflected in many a different direction, form a beautiful multiplicity of colours.—A stranger, as he walks along the sandy beach; and, lost in pensive attention, listens to the murmurings of the restless flood, is agreeably alarmed by the gay decorations of the surface. With entertainment, and with wonder, he sees the curling waves, here glistering with white, there glowing with purple; in one place, wearing an azure tincture; in another, glancing a cast of undulating green; in the whole, exhibiting a piece of fluid scenery, that may vie with yonder pensil tapestries, though wrought in the loom, and tinged with the dyes of heaven.

BUT, while I am transported by fancy to the shores of the ocean, the great luminary is sunk beneath the horizon, and totally disappears. The whole face of the ground is overspread with shades; or with, what one of the finest painters of nature calls, a dun obscurity. Only a few very superior eminences are tipt with streaming silver. The tops of groves, and lofty towers, catch the last smiles of day*: are still irradiated by the departing

K

parting

* See this remarkable appearance delicately described, and wrought into a comparison, which, in my Opinion,

parting beams.—But oh! how transient is the distinction! how momentary the gift! Like all the blessings, which mortals enjoy below, it is gone, almost as soon as granted. See! how languishingly it trembles on the leafy spire; and glimmers, with a dying faintness, on the mountain's brow. The little vivacity, that remains, decays every moment. It can no longer hold its station. While I speak, it expires; and resigns the world to the gradual approaches of night.

—————Now twilight grey
Has in her sober liv'ry all things clad †.

EVERY object, a little while ago, glared with light; but now, all appears under a more qualified lustre. The animals harmonize with the insensible creation; and what was gay in those, as well as glittering in this, gives place to an universal gravity. In the meadows, all was jocund and sportive: but now the gamesome lambs are grown weary of their frolics; and the tired shepherd has imposed silence on his pipe. In the branches, all was sprightliness and song: but now the lively green is wrapt in the descending glooms; and no tuneful airs are heard, but only the plaintive stock-dove, cooing mournfully through the grove.—Should I now be vain and trifling, the heavens and the earth would rebuke my unseasonable levity. Therefore, be these moments devoted to thoughts, sedate, as the closing day; solemn, as the face of things. And, indeed, however my social hours are enlivened with innocent pleasantries; let every evening, in her sable habit, toll the bell to serious consideration.

Nothing

Opinion, is one of the most just, beautiful, and noble pieces of imagery to be found in modern poetry.

Night-Thoughts, No. II. p. 42. 4to. Ed.

† Milt. Par. Lost, B. iv. l. 598.

Nothing can be more proper, for a creature that borders upon eternity, and is hasting continually to his final audit, than daily to slip away from the circle of amusements, and frequently to relinquish the hurry of business, in order to consider and adjust “the things that belong to his peace.”

SINCE the sun is departed, from whence can it proceed, that I am not involved in pitchy darkness? Whence, these remainders of diminished brightness? which, though scarcely forming a refulgence, yet smooth the rugged brow of night. I see not the shining orb, and yet am cheered with a portion of his softened splendors.——Does he remember us, in his progress through other climes; and send a detachment of his rays, to escort us in our further motions; or cover (if I may use the military term) our retreat, from the scene of Action? Has he bequeathed us a dividend of his beams, sufficient to render our circumstances easy, and our situation agreeable? till sleep pours its soft oppression on the organs of sense; till sleep suspends all the operations of our hands; and intirely supersedes any more occasion for the light.

No: it is ill judged and unreasonable, to ascribe this beneficent conduct to the sun. Not unto him; not unto him: but unto his almighty maker we are obliged, for this noble present, this valuable legacy. The gracious author of our being has so disposed the collection of circumambient air, as to make it productive of this fine and beneficial effect. The sun-beams, falling on the higher parts of the aerial fluid, instead of passing on in straight lines, are bent inward, and inflected to our sight. Their natural course is over-ruled, and they are bidden to wheel about; on purpose, to favour us with a welcome and salutary visit.——By which means, the blessing of Light and the season of business are considerably prolonged.

longed. And, what is a very endearing circumstance, prolonged most considerably; when the vehement heats of summer incline the student to postpone his walk, till the temperate evening prevails; when the important labours of the harvest call the husbandman abroad, before the day is fully risen.

AFTER all the ardors of the sultry day, how reviving is this coolness!—This gives new verdure to the fading plants; new vivacity to the withering flowers; and a more exquisite fragrancy to their mingled scents.—By this, the air also receives a new force, and is qualified to exert itself with greater activity: to brace our limbs; to heave our lungs; and co-operate, with a brisker Impulse, in perpetuating the circulation of our blood.—This I might call the grand Alembic of nature; which distils her most sovereign cordial, the refreshing dews. Incessant heat would destroy the pearly drops; or oblige them to evaporate, in imperceptible exhalations. Turbulent winds, or even the gentler motions of Aurora's fan, would dissipate the rising vapours, and not suffer them to come to a coalition. But, favoured by the stillness, and condensed by the coolness of the night, they form that finely-tempered humidity, which cheers the vegetable world, as sleep exhilarates the animal.

SUCH are the advantages of solitude. The world is a troubled ocean; and who can erect stable purposes, on its fluctuating waves? The world is a school of wrong: and who does not feel himself warping to its pernicious influence*? On this sea of glass†, how insensibly we slide from

* Nunquam a turba mores, quos extuli, refero. Aliquid, ex eo quod composui, turbatur: aliquid, ex his quæ fugavi, redit. Inimica est multorum conversatio

Senec.

† Rev. xv. 2.

our steadfastness! Some sacred truth, which was struck in lively characters on our souls, is obscured, if not obliterated. Some noble resolution, which heaven had wrought in our breasts, is shaken, if not overthrown. Some inticing vanity, which we had solemnly renounced, again practises its charms, and again captivates our affections. How often has an unwary glance kindled a fever of irregular desire in our hearts? How often has a word of applause dropt luscious poison into our ears; or some disrespectful expression raised a gust of passion in our bosoms? Our innocence is of so tender a constitution, that it suffers in the promiscuous croud; our purity, of so delicate a complexion, that it scarce touches on the world without contracting a stain. We see, we hear, with peril.

BUT here safety dwells. Every meddling and intrusive avocation is secluded. Silence holds the door against the strife of tongues, and all the impertinencies of idle conversation. The busy swarm of vain images, and cajoling temptations, that beset us, with a buzzing importunity, amidst the gaieties of life, are chased by these thickening shades.—Here I may, without disturbance, commune with my own heart; and learn that best of sciences, to know myself. Here the soul may rally her dissipated powers, and grace recover its native energy. This is the opportunity, to rectify the corrupting examples. This is the place, where I may, with advantage, apply myself to subdue the rebel within; and be master, not of a sceptre, but of myself.—Throng then, ye ambitious, the levees of the powerful; I will be punctual in my assignations with solitude. To a mind intent upon its own improvement, solitude has charms incomparably more engaging, than the entertainments pre-

sented in the theatre; or the honours conferred in the drawing-room.

I SAID solitude—But am I then alone?—’Tis true, my acquaintance are at a distance. I have stole away from company, and am remote from all human observation.——But that is an alarming thought,

Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth,
Unseen, both when we wake and when we sleep†.

PERHAPS, there may be numbers of those invisible beings, patrolling the same retreat; and joining with me in contemplating the Creator’s work. Perhaps those ministering spirits, who rejoice at the conversion of a sinner, and hold up the goings of the righteous, may follow us to the lonely recess; and, even in our most solitary moments, be our constant attendants.—What a pleasing awe is awakened, by such a reflection! How venerable it renders my retired walk! I am struck with reverence, as under the roof of some sacred edifice, or in the presence-chamber of some mighty monarch.—O! may I never bring any pride of imagination, nor indulge the least dissolute affection; where such refined and exalted intelligences exercise their watch!

’Tis possible, that I am encompassed with such a cloud of witnesses; but it is certain, that God, the infinite and eternal God, is ever with me. The great Jehovah, before whom all the angelic armies bow their heads, and veil their faces, surrounds me; supports me; pervades me. “In Him
“I live, move, and have my being.” The whole world is his august temple; and, in the most sequestered corner, I appear before his adorable majesty, no less than when I worship in his house, or
kneel

† Milt. Par. Lost, B. iv. l. 677.

kneel at his altar. In every place, therefore, let me pay him the homage of a heart, cleansed from idols, and devoted to his service. In every circumstance, let me feel no ambition, but to please him; nor covet any happiness, but to enjoy him.

How sublime is the description, and how striking the sentiment, in that noble passage of the Psalms, "Whether shall I go from thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" If I climb up into the heights of heaven thou art there enthroned in light. If I go down to the depths of the grave, thou art there also in thy pavilion of darkness. If I retire to the remotest earthen climes, where the morning first takes wing: if, swifter than the darting ray, I pass to the opposite regions of the west, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea*: shall I, in that distant situation, be beyond thy reach: or, by this sudden transition, escape thy notice? So far from it; that could I, with one glance of thought, transport myself beyond all the bounds of creation; I should still be incircled with the immensity of thy essence; or rather, still be inclosed in the hollow of thy hand. Important and delightful truth! let it be interwoven with every thought! and become one with the very consciousness of my existence! that I may continually walk with God, and conduct myself, in every step of my behaviour, "as seeing Him that is invisible."

THEY are the happy persons; felicity, true felicity, is all their own; who live under an habitual sense of God's omnipresence, and a sweet persuasion of his special love. If dangers threaten, their

K 4

impregnable

* Psal. cxxxix. 7, 8, 9. There is I think, an additional strength and beauty in the thought; if, with the learned Mr. Mudge, we suppose an Antithesis between the two clauses of this last verse, as there evidently is between those of the preceding; and that they express, in a poetical style, the extremities of the East and the West.

impregnable defence is at hand : nothing can be so near to terrify, as their Almighty Guardian to secure them.—To these the hours can never be tedious; and it is impossible, for them to be alone. Do they step aside from the occupations of animal life? A more exalted set of employments engage their attention. They address themselves, in all the various acts of devotion, to their heavenly father; who now sees in secret, and will hereafter reward them openly. They spread all their wants, before his indulgent eye; and disburden all their sorrows, into his compassionate bosom.—Do they withdraw from human society? They find themselves under the more immediate regards of their Maker. If they resign the satisfactions of social intercourse; it is to cultivate a correspondence with the condescending Deity, and taste the pleasures of divine friendship.—What is such a state, but the very suburbs of heaven? What is such a conduct, but an antepast of eternal blessedness?

Now, my soul, the day is ended. The hours are all fled : They are fled to the supreme Judge, and have given in their evidence. An evidence, registered in heaven; and to be produced at the great audit.—Happy they ! whose improvement has kept pace with the passing minutes. Who have seized them, as they advanced; and engaged them in the pursuit of wisdom, or the service of virtue.

How is the day gone, almost as soon as it dawned!—The silent moments slip away insensibly. No thief steals more unperceived from the pillaged house. Wherever we are, how ever employed, Time pursues his incessant course. Though we are listless and dilatory; the great measurer of our days presses on; still presses on, in his unwearied career; and whirls our weeks, and months, and years away.—Is it not then surprisingly strange,

to

to hear people complain of the tediousness of their time, and how heavy it hangs upon their hands? To see them contriving a variety of amusing artifices, to accelerate its flight, and get rid of its burden?—Ah! thoughtless mortals! Why need you urge the headlong torrent! Your days are swifter than a post; which, carrying dispatches of the last importance, with unremitted speed scours the road. They pass away like the nimble ships; which have the wind in their wings, and skim along the watry plain. They hasten to their destined period, with the rapidity of an eagle; which leaves the stormy blasts behind her, while she cleaves the air, and darts upon her prey*.

AND now it is gone, how short it appears! When my fond eye beheld it in perspective, it seemed a very considerable space. Minutes, crowded upon minutes, and hours, ranged behind hours, exhibited an extensive plan, and flattered me with a long progression of pleasures. But upon a retrospective view, how wonderfully is the scene altered! The landscape, large and spacious, which a warm fancy drew, brought to the test of cool experience, shrinks into a span. Just as the shores vanish, and mountains dwindle to a spot; when the sailor, surrounded by skies and ocean, throws his last look on his native land.—How clearly do I

K 5

now

* Job ix. 25, 26. By these three very expressive Images, the inspired Poet represents the unintermitted and rapid Flight of time. The passage is illustrated with great judgment, and equal delicacy, in Dr. Grey's most ingenious abridgment of Schultens—*Quæ tribus in elementis velocissima, hic admirabili cum emphasi congeruntur. In terris, nil pernicious cursum, & quidem æti quid ferente. Rapidus tamen adhuc undas, non secant, sed supervolant, navigiola papyro contexta. Omnium rapidissime aerem grandibus alis permetitur aquila, præcipiti lapsu ruens in prædam.*

now discover the cheat! May it never impose, upon my unwary imagination again! I find, there is nothing abiding on this side eternity. A long duration, in a state of finite existence, is mere illusion.

PERHAPS, the healthy, and the gay, may not readily credit the serious truth; especially from a young pen, and new to its employ. Let us then refer ourselves to the decision of the ancient. Ask some venerable old person, that is just marching off the mortal stage; how many have been the days of the years of thy life*? It was a monarch's question; and therefore can want no recommendation, to the fashionable world.—Observe how he shakes his hoary locks, and from a deep felt conviction replies; “Fourscore years have finished their rounds, “to furrów these cheeks, and clothe this head in “snow. Such a term may seem long and large, to “inconsiderate youth. But oh! how short, how “scanty, to one that has made the experiment! “Short, as the gleam of transient sunshine; scanty, “as the shadow that departeth. Methinks, it was “but yesterday, that I exchanged my childish sports, “for manly exercises; and now, I am resigning “them both, for the sleep of death. As soon as “we are born, we begin to draw to our end; and “how small is the interval, between the cradle and “the tomb!”—O! may we believe this testimony of mature age! May every evening bring it, with clearer evidence, to our minds! And may we form such an estimate of the little pittance, while it is upon the advancing hand; as we shall certainly make, when the sands are all run down!

LET me add one reflection on the work to be done, while this shuttle is flying through the loom†.

A work

* Gen. xlvii. 8.

† My days are swifter than a Weaver's Shuttle. Job vii. 6.

A work of no small difficulty, and yet of the utmost consequence.—Hast thou not seen, hast thou not heard of, the excellent of the earth; who were living images of their Maker? His divine likeness was transfused into their hearts, and beamed forth in all their conduct. Beamed forth in the meekness of wisdom, and purity of affection; in all the tender offices of love, and all the noble efforts of zeal. To be stamp'd with the same beautiful signature, and to be followers of them, as they were of CHRIST? this, this is thy business. On the accomplishment of this, thy eternal all depends. And will an affair of such unspeakable weight admit of a moment's delay, or consist with the least remissness?—Especially, since much of thy appointed time is already elapsed; and the remainder is all uncertainty, save only that it is in the very act to fly.—Or suppose, thou hadst made a covenant with the grave, and wast assured of reaching the age of Methuselah; how soon would even such a lease expire!—Extend it, if you please, still farther, and let it be co-existent with nature itself: yet, how speedily will the consummation of all things commence! For, yet a very little while, and the commissioned archangel lifts up his hand to heaven, and swears by the almighty name, that time shall be no longer*. Then, abused opportunities,

* This alludes to the beginning of Revelations the xth; which, abstracted from its spiritual meaning, and considered only as a stately Piece of Machinery, well deserves our attention; and, I will venture to say, has not its Superior, perhaps not its Equal, in any of the most celebrated masters of Greece and Rome. All that is gloomy or beautiful in the atmosphere, all that is striking or magnificent in every element, is taken in to heighten the idea. Yet nothing is disproportionate; but an uniform air of ineffable majesty greatens, exalts, ennobles

ties, will never return; and new opportunities, will never more be offered. Then, should negligent mortals wish, ever so passionately, for a few hours;—a few moments only;—to be thrown back from the opening eternity; thousand of worlds would not be able to procure the grant.

SHALL

ennobles the whole.—Be pleased to observe the Aspect of this august Personage. All the brightness of the Sun shines in his Countenance: and all the rage of the fire burns in his Feet.—See his Apparel. The clouds compose his Robe, and the drapery of the Sky floats upon his Shoulders. The Rainbow forms his Diadem; and that which “compasseth the Heaven with a glorious Circle,” is the ornament of his Head.—Behold his Attitude. One foot stands on the ocean, and the other rests on the land. The wide extended earth, and the world of waters, serve as pedestals for those mighty columns.—Consider the Action. His Hand is lifted up to the height of the Stars. He speaks; and the Regions of the Firmament echo with the mighty Accents, as the mid-night Desert resounds with the Lion’s Roar. The artillery of the skies is discharged at the signal; a peal of seven-fold thunder spreads the alarm; and prepares the world to receive his orders.—To finish all; and give the highest grandeur, as well as the utmost solemnity, to the representation; hear the decree that issues from his mouth. ‘He swears by Him that liveth for ever and ever.’ In whatever manner, so majestic a person had expressed himself; He could not fail of commanding universal attention. But, when He confirms his speech, by a most sacred and inviolable oath; we are not only wrapt in silent suspense, but overwhelmed with the profoundest awe—He swears ‘That time shall be no longer.’ Was ever voice, so full of terror; so big with wonder? It proclaims, not the fall of empires, but the final period of things. It strikes off the wheels of nature; bids ages and generations cease to roll; and, with one potent word, consigns a whole world over to dissolution.—This is one, among a multitude of very sublime and masterly strokes, to be found in that too much neglected book—the BIBLE.

SHALL I, now, be industrious to shorten, what is no longer than a span; or to quicken the pace of what is ever on the wing? Shall I squander away what is unutterably important, while it lasts; and, when once departed, is altogether irrecoverable? O! my soul forbear the folly; forbear the desperate extravagance. Wilt thou chide as a loiterer, the arrow that boundeth from the string; or sweep away diamonds, as the refuse of thy house?—Throw time away! Astonishing, ruinous, irreparable profuseness! throw empires away, and be blameless—But O! be parsimonious of thy days; husband thy precious hours. They go connected, indissolubly connected, with heaven or hell*. Improved, they are a sure pledge of everlasting glory; wasted, they are a sad preface to never ending confusion and anguish.

WHAT a profound silence has composed the world; so profound is the silence, that my very breath seems a noise: the ticking of my watch is distinctly heard: if I do but stir, it creates a disturbance.—There is, now, none of that confused Din, from that tumultuous city: no voice of jovial rustics, from the neighbouring meadow: no chirping melody, from the shady thicket.—Every lip is sealed: not the least whisper invades the air;

* I remember to have seen, upon a sun-dial in a Physician's garden at Northampton, the following INSCRIPTION; which, I think, is the most proper motto for the instrument, that measures our time; and the most striking admonition, which can possibly be given to every eye that glances upon it;—*ab hoc Momento pendent Eternitas*.—The weighty sense of which, I know not how to express in English, more happily than in those words of Dr. Watts,

Good God! on what a slender Thread
(Or, on what a Moment of Time)
Hang everlasting Things!

air; nor the least motion, rustles among the boughs. Echo herself sleeps unmolested. The expanded ear, though all attention, catches no sound, but the liquid lapse of a murmuring stream.

“All things are hush’d, as nature’s self lay dead.”

IF, in the midst of this deep and universal composure, ten thousand bellowing thunders should burst over my head, and rend the skies, with their united volleys: O! how should I bear so unexpected a shock? It would stun my senses, and confound my thoughts. I should shudder in every limb; and, perhaps, sink to the earth with terror.—Consider then, O mortals! consider, what a much more prodigious and amazing call will, ere long, alarm your sleeping bones. When the tenants of the tomb have slumbered, in the most undisturbed repose, for a multitude of ages; what an inconceivable consternation must the shout of the archangel, and the trump of God, occasion! Will it not wound the ear of the ungodly; and affright, even to distraction, the impenitent sinner? The stupendous peal will sound through the vast of heaven; will shake the foundations of nature; and pierce even the deepest recesses of the grave. And how——O! how will the prisoners of divine justice be able to endure that tremendous summons, to a more tremendous tribunal?—Do thou, my soul, listen to the still voice of the gospel. Attend, in this thy day, to the gracious invitations of thy Saviour. Then, shall that great midnight cry lose its horror, and be music to thy ears. It shall be welcome to thy reviving clay, as the tidings of liberty, to the dungeon captive; as the year of jubilee, to the harassed slave. This, this shall be its charming import, “awake, and sing, ye that dwell in “dust*.”

WHAT

* Isa. xxv. 19.

WHAT a general cessation of affairs has this dusky hour introduced! A little while ago, all was hurry, hurry. Life and activity exerted themselves in a thousand busy forms. The city swarmed, with passing and repassing multitudes. All the country was sweat and dust. The air floated in perpetual agitation, by the flitting birds, and humming bees. Art sat prying with her piercing eyes; while industry plied her restless hands;—but see; how all this fervent, and impetuous bustle is fled with the setting sun. The beasts are slunk to their grassy couch; and the winged people are retired, to their downy nests. The hammer has resigned its sounding task, and the file ceases to repeat its flying touches. Shut is the well-frequented shop, and its threshold no longer worn by the feet of numerous customers. The village-swain lies drowned in slumbers; and even his trusty dog, who, for a considerable time, stood centry at his door, is extended at his ease, and snores with his master.— In every place, toil reclines her head, and application folds her arms. All interests seem to be forgot; all pursuits are suspended: all employment is sunk away; sunk away, like the fluttering myriads, that lately sported in the sun's departing rays. 'Tis like the sabbath of universal nature; or as though the pulse of life stood still.

THUS will it be, with our infinitely momentous concerns; when once the shadows of the evening, that long evening which follows the footsteps of death, are stretched over us. The dead cannot seek unto GOD; the living, the living alone, are possessed of this inestimable opportunity*. “There
“ is

*—Nunc, nunc properandus, & acri

Fingendus sine fine rota. PERS.

Behold! now is the accepted Time. Behold! now is the day of Salvation. 2 Cor. vi. 2.

“ is no work or device, no repentance or amendment in the grave†, whither we are all hasting.” When once that closing scene is advanced, we shall have no other part to act on this earthly theatre. Then, the sluggard, who has slumbered away life in a criminal inactivity, must lie down in hopeless distress, and everlasting sorrow. Then, that awful doom will take place, “ he that is holy let him be holy still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy for ever.”—

Is it so, my soul? Is this the only, only time allotted, for obtaining the great reward, and making thy salvation sure? And art thou lulled in a vain security; or dreaming on, in a supine inadvertency? Start, O! start from thy trance, gird up the loins of thy mind, and work while it is day. Improve

† They, who are gone down to the grave, are represented (Isai. xxxviii. 11.) by the phrase, **יִשְׁבּוּ לָלֵךְ**—rendered by “ Vitranga, those that inhabit the land of Intermision or Cessation.”—Which prevents all appearance of Tautology in the sentence; that is, I think, a valuable improvement of the transaction: as it conveys an idea, not only distinct from the preceding, but of a very poetical and very afflicting nature; such as was perfectly natural to the royal singer, and royal sufferer, to dwell upon, in his desponding moments.—Thus interpreted, the sense will run; I shall see “ Man no more: I shall be cut off from the cheerful ways of men, and all the sweets of human society. “ And, what is a farther aggravation of the threatened stroke, I shall, by its taking place, be numbered “ with those, that inhabit the land of intire Cessation “ and inactivity: where there will be no more possibility, of contributing to the happiness of my kingdom; “ no more opportunity, of advancing my Creator’s “ Glory, or of making my own final salvation sure.”—A sentiment like this is grand, and important; full of piety, and full of benevolence; removes all suspicion of unbecoming Pusillanimity, and does the highest honour to the Monarch’s character.

prove the present seed-time, that eternity may yield a joyful harvest.——We especially, who are watchmen in Israel, and ministers of the glorious gospel; may we be awakened, by this consideration, to all assiduity in our holy office. Some or other of our people are ever and anon departing into the invisible state; all our friends are making incessant approaches to their long home; and we ourselves shall very shortly be transmitted to the confinement of the tomb. This is the favourable juncture, wherein alone we can contribute to their endless welfare. This is the crisis, the all important crisis of their final felicity. Instantly, therefore, let us pour in our wholesome instructions; instantly, let us ply them with our earnest exhortations. A moment's delay may be an irreparable loss; may be irretrievable ruin. While we procrastinate, a fatal stroke may intervene; and place us, beyond the power of administering; or place them beyond all possibility of receiving, any spiritual good.*

How frequently is the face of nature changed! and by changing made more agreeable!——The long-continued glitter of the day renders the soothing shades of the evening doubly welcome. Nor does the morn ever purple the east with so pleasing a lustre, as after the fullen gloom of a dark and black night.——At present a calm of tranquillity, and undisturbed repose, is spread

* The case represented by the Prophet (1 Kings xx. 1.) seems perfectly applicable on this occasion. "As my servant was busy here and there, He was gone." So, while we are either remiss in our function, or laying ourselves out upon inferior cares, the people of our charge may be gone:—gone beyond the influence of our counsels; beyond the reach of our prayers:—gone to the unchangeable and eternal state.

through the universe. The weary winds have forgot to blow.—The gentle gales have fanned themselves asleep. Nothing stirs. Not so much as a single leaf nods. Even the quivering aspen rests. And not one breath curls o'er the stream.—Sometimes, the tempest summons all the forces of the air; and pours itself with resistless fury, from the angry north. The whole atmosphere is tossed into tumultuous confusion, and the watery world is heaved to the clouds. The astonished mariner, and his straining vessel, now scale the rolling mountain, and hang dreadfully visible on the broken surge: now shoot with headlong impetuosity, into the yawning gulph, and neither hulk, nor mast, is seen. The storm sweeps over the continent: raves along the city-streets: struggles through the forest-boughs; and terrifies the savage nations with a howl, more wildly horrid than their own. The knotty oaks bend before the blast; their iron trunks groan; and their stubborn limbs are dashed to the ground. The lofty dome rocks; and even the solid tower totters on its basis.

SUCH variations are kindly contrived, with an evident condescension to the fickleness of our taste. Because, a perpetual similarity of objects would create a cold disgust; therefore, the indulgent father of our race has diversified the universal scene, and bid every appearance bring with it the charm of novelty.—But this circumstance is as beneficial, as it is entertaining. Providence ever gracious to mortals; ever intent upon promoting our felicity; has taken care to mingle, in the constitution of things what is pleasing to our imagination, with what is serviceable to our interests. The piercing winds, and rugged aspect of winter, render the balmy gales, and flowery scenes of spring, peculiarly delightful. At the same time, the keen frosts mellow the soil, and prepare it for the hand
of

of industry. The rushing rains impregnate the glebe, and fit it for a magazine of plenty. The earth is a great laboratory; and December's cold collects the gross materials, which are sublimated by the refining warmth of May. The air is a pure elastic fluid; and was it always to remain in this motionless serenity, it would lose much of its active spring; was it never agitated by those wholesome concussions, it would contract a noisome, perhaps, a pestilential taint. Instead of purifying, it would corrupt the vital juices; and, instead of inhaling refreshment, our respiration might be a source of diseases; or every gasp we draw, might be death*.

—How then should we admire! oh! how should we adore, that happy union of benignity and wisdom; which from a variety of dispensations, produces an uniformity of good; a perpetual succession of delights, and uninterrupted series of advantages.

THE darkness is now at its height; and I cannot but admire the obliging manner of its taking place.

* Considering the immense quantity of coals, and other combustible materials, that are daily consumed and evaporate into the air.—Considering the numberless steams, and clouds of smoke, that almost continually overwhelm populous cities—the noisome exhalations, that arise from thronged Infirmaries and loathsome Jails; from stagnating lakes, and putrid fens;—the variety of offensive and unwholesome effluvia, that proceed from other causes;—it is a very remarkable instance of a Providence, at once tenderly kind, and infinitely powerful, that Mankind is not suffocated with Stench; that the Air is not choaked with Filth.—The air is the common sewer, into which ten thousand times ten thousand nuisances are incessantly discharged; and yet is preserved so thoroughly clear, as to afford the most transparent medium for vision; so delicately undulatory as to transmit, with all imaginable Distinctness, every diversity of sound; so perfectly pure as to be the constant refiner of the fluids, in every animal that breathes.

place. It comes not with a blunt and abrupt incivility, but makes gentle and respectful advances. A precipitate transition, from the splendors of day to all the horrors of midnight, would be both inconvenient and frightful. It would bewilder the traveller in his journey; it would strike the creation with amazement; and, perhaps, be pernicious to the organs of sight. Therefore, the gloom rushes not upon us instantaneously, but increases by slow degrees; and, sending twilight before as its harbinger, decently advertises us of its approach. By this means, we are neither alarmed, nor incommoded, by the change; but are able to take all suitable and timely measures, for its reception.—Thus graciously has Providence regulated, not only the grand vicissitudes of the seasons, but also the common interchanges of light and darkness, with an apparent reference to our comfort.

Now the fierce inhabitants of the forest forsake their dens. A thousand grim forms, a thousand growling monsters, pace the desert. Death is in their jaws, while stung with hunger, and a thirst for blood, they roam their nightly rounds.—O! unfortunate traveller, overtaken by the night, in those dismal wilds! How must he stand aghast, at the mingled yell of ravenous throats, and lions roaring after their prey! Defend him, propitious heaven! or else he must see his endearing spouse, and hail his native home, no more!—Now, the growling wolf, like a murderous ruffian, dogs the shepherd's footsteps, and besets his bleating charge. The Fox, like a crafty felon, steals to the thatched cottage, and carries off the feathered booty.

HAPPY for the world, were these the only destroyers that walk in darkness. But, alas! there are savages in human shape; who muffled in shades, infest the abodes of civilized life. The
sons

sons of violence make choice of this season †, to perpetrate the most outrageous acts of wrong and robbery. The adulterer waiteth for the twilight; and, baser than the villain on the highway, betrays the honour of his bosom friend. Now, faction forms her close cabals, and whispers her traitorous insinuations. Now, rebellion plans her accursed plots, and prepare the train to blow a nation into ruin. Now crimes, that hide their odious heads in the day, haunt the seats of society, and stalk through the gloom with audacious front. Now the vermin of the stews crawl from their lurking holes, to wallow in sin, and feed on the venom of the night. Each soothing himself with the fond notion, that all is safe; that no eye sees.

AND are they then concealed? Preposterous madmen! To draw the curtain between their infamous practices, and a little set of mortals; but lay them open to all these chaste and wakeful eyes of heaven ‡.—Are they then concealed? No, truly; were these vigilant luminaries closed; an eye keener than the lightning's flash, brighter than ten thousand Suns, beholds their every motion. Their thickest shades are beaming day §, to the jealous inspector, and supreme judge of human actions—Deluded creatures! have ye not heard, have ye not read,

† ————— When Night
Darkens the Streets, then wander forth the Sons
Of Belial, flown with insolence and wine.

MILT.

‡ ——— ‘ Sed Luna videt, sed Sidera Testes
Intendunt Oculos.

§ This is finely, and forcibly, expressed by the Psalmist: “If I say peradventure the darkness shall cover me, then shall my night be turned to day:” Or as it may be rendered somewhat more emphatically; “Even the night shall be broad day-light: all around me.”
Psal. cxxxix. 10.

read, "That clouds and darkness are his majestic residence†? In that very gloom, to which you fly for covert, he erects his throne. What you reckon your screen, is the bar of his tribunal. O! remember this: stand in awe, and sin not. Remember, that the great and terrible God is about your path §, when you take your midnight range; is about your bed, when you indulge the loose desire; and spies out all your ways be they ever so secretly conducted, or artfully disguised.

SOME minutes ago a passenger crossed alone the road. His horse's foot struck the ground, and fetched fire from a flint. My eye, tho' at a distance, caught the view; and saw, with great clearness, the bright sparkles: Of which, had I been ever so near, I should not have discerned the least glimpse, under the blaze of day,—So†, when

† Psal. xcvii. 2.

§ The original words are much stronger than the translation. וְרִיָּה and חֲסִבְנָה signify thou sittest my path; and art familiarly or intimately, acquainted with all my ways. The former, I apprehend, denoting the exact cognizance, which the Almighty taketh; the latter implying the constant inspection, which he exerciseth, over all the circumstances of our conduct. Psal. cxxxix. 2.

† I beg leave to inform the young gentleman, whose name dignifies my dedication; that this was a remark of his honoured Father, when we rode together, and conversed in a dusky evening. I mention this circumstance, partly to secure the paragraph from contempt; partly, to give Him, and the world, an idea of that eminently serious taste, which distinguished my deceased friend——The less obvious the reflections, the more clearly it discovers a turn of mind remarkably spiritual; which would suffer nothing to escape, without yielding some religious improvement: and the meaner the incident, the more admirable was the fertility of imagination.

when sickness has drawn a veil over the gaiety of our hearts: when misfortunes have eclipsed the splendor of our outward circumstances; how many important convictions present themselves, with the brightest evidence! Under the sun-shine of prosperity, they lay undiscovered; but, when some intervening cloud has darkened the scene, they emerge out of their obscurity, and even glitter upon our minds. Then the world, that delusive cheat, confesses her emptiness: but JESUS, the bright and morning-star, beams forth with inimitable lustre. Then vice loses all her fallacious allurements; that painted strumpet is horrible, as the hags of hell: but virtue, despised virtue, gains loveliness from a louting providence, and treads the shades with more than mortal charms—May this reconcile me, and all the sons of sorrow, to our appointed share of suffering. If tribulation tend to dissipate the inward darkness, and pour heavenly day upon our minds; welcome distress, welcome disappointment; welcome whatever our forward flesh, or peevish passions, would miscall calamities. These light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall sit easy upon our spirits: since they befriend our knowledge: promote our faith; and so, “work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. §”

How

nation, which could deduce the noblest truths from the most trivial occurrences.

§ Cor. iv. 17. The great Stephens, that oracle of Grecian learning, translates our Apostle's Phrase—*καὶ οὐτις βολη*, Quo nihil majus dici aut fingi potest. But how does the sense rise! How is the idea enlarged, under two such forcible expressions!—The whole verse is a master-piece of the beautiful Antithesis, the lively Description, and the nervous Diction. It is one of those noble passages in the inspired writings, which like
some

How has this darkness snatched every splendid and graceful object from my sight! It has dashed the sponge over the picture of spring, and destroyed all the delicate distinctions of things. Where are now the fine tinges, that so lately charmed me from the glowing Parterre? The blush is struck out from the cheeks of the rose; and the snowy hue is dropt from the lily. I cast my eyes towards a magnificent seat; but the aspiring columns, and fair expanding front, are mingled in rude confusion. Without the sun, all the elegance of the blooming world is a mere blank; all the symmetry of architecture, a shapeless heap.

Is not this an expressive emblem of the loveliness, which the sun of righteousness transfuses into all that is amiable? Was it not for JESUS, and his merits, I should sigh with anguish of spirit; even while I rove through ranks of the most beautiful flowers, or breathe amidst a wilderness of sweets. Was it not for JESUS, and his merits, I should roam, like some disconsolate Spectre, even through the smiles of creation, and the caresses of fortune. My conversation in this world, though dressed in the most engaging forms of external pleasure, would be like the passage of a condemned malefactor, through enamelled meadows, and bowers of bliss, to be broke upon the wheel, or tortured to death on the rack. But a daily reflection, on the Lamb's atoneing blood; a comfortable trust, that my soul is reconciled through this glorious expiation;

some rich aromatic plants, cannot be transferred from their own generous and native soil without being impaired in their vivacity, and losing much of their delicacy. Perhaps the following version may be somewhat less injurious to the sacred Original, than the common translation;—"Our very light affliction, which is but just for the present moment, worketh out a far more exceeding and incomparably great, and eternal Weight of Glory."

piation; this is the Ray, the golden Ray, that irradiates the face of the universe. This is the Oil of Beauty, which makes all things wear a chearful aspect; and the Oil of Gladness, which disposes the spectator to behold them with delight*. This, this, is the secret charm, that teaches nature, in all her operations, so exquisitely to please.

“MAN goeth forth to his work, and to his labour, till the evening.” But then his strength fails; his spirits flag; and he stands in need, not only of some Respite from Toil, but of some kindly and sovereign Refreshments.—What an admirable provision for this purpose is Sleep! Sleep introduces a most welcome vacation, both for the soul and body. The exercises of the brain, and the labours of the hands, are at once discontinued. So that the weary Limbs repair their exhausted vigour; while the pensive Thoughts drop their load of sorrows, and the busy ones rest from the fatigue of intense application.—Most reviving cordial! Equally beneficial to our animal and intellectual powers. It supplies the fleshy Machine, and keeps all its nice movements
L in

* Thus applied, that fine piece of Flattery, addressed to the Heathen emperor, is strictly and literally true;

——Vultus ubi tuus

Affulsit populo, gratior it dies,

Et soles melius nitent.

HORAT.

Which I would cast in a Christian mould, and thus translate:

When faith presents the Saviour's death,

And whispers' "This is thine;"

Sweetly my rising hours advance,

And peacefully decline.

While such my views, the radiant sun

Sheds a more sprightly ray:

Each object smiles; all nature charms;

I sing my cares away.

in a proper posture for easy play. It animates the thinking Faculties with fresh alacrity, and rekindles their ardor for the studies of the dawn. Without these enlivening recruits, how soon would the most robust constitution be wasted into a walking Skeleton; and the most learned sage degenerate into a hoary Idiot!—Some time ago, I beheld, with surprise, poor Florio. His air was wild; his countenance meagre; his thoughts roving, and speech disconcerted. Inquiring the cause of this strange alteration, I was informed, That, for several nights, he had not closed his eyes in sleep. For want of which noble Restorative, that sprightly youth, who was once the life of the discourse, and the darling of the company; is become a spectacle of misery and horror.

How many of my fellow-creatures are, at this very instant, confined to the Bed of Languishing; and complaining, with that illustrious sufferer of old, Wearisome Nights are appointed to me! * Instead of indulging soft repose, they are counting the tedious hours; telling every striking clock; or measuring the very moments, by their throbbing pulse. How many, harassed with Pain, most passionately long to obtain some little truce from their agonies, in peaceful slumbers! How many, sick with Disquietude, and restless even on their downy pillows, would purchase this transient oblivion of their woes, almost at any rate!—That, which wealth cannot procure; which multitudes sigh for in vain; thy God has bestowed on thee, times out of number. The welcome Visitant, punctual at the needed hour, has entered thy chamber, and poured his poppies round thy couch; has gently closed thy eye-lids, and shed his slumberous Dews over all thy senses.

SINCE sleep is so absolutely necessary; so inestimably

* Job vii. 3.

mably valuable; observe, what a fine Apparatus Almighty Goodness has made, to accommodate us with the balmy Blessing. With how kind a precaution, He removes whatever might obstruct its access, or impede its influence. He draws around us the Curtain of Darkness; which inclines us to a drowsy indolence, and conceals every object, that might too strongly agitate the sense. He conveys Peace into our Apartments; and imposes silence, on the whole creation. Every animal is bidden to tread softly, or rather to cease from its Motions, when man is retiring to his repose.—May we not discern, in this gracious disposition of things, the tender Cares of a Nursing-mother; who hushes every noise, and secludes every disturbance, when she has laid the child of her love to rest? So, by such soothing circumstances, and gently-working Opiates, HE giveth to his Beloveth, Sleep*.

ANOTHER signal instance of a providence intent upon our welfare is, that we are preserved safe in the hours of Slumber. How are we then lost to all apprehension of danger; even though the murderer be at our bed-side, or his naked sword at our breast! Destitute of all concern for ourselves, we are unable to think of, much more to provide for, our own security. At these moments, therefore, we lie open to innumerable perils: perils, from the resistless rage of Flames: perils, from the insidious artifices of Thieves, or the outrageous violence of Robbers; without either vigilance to observe the foe, or strength to resist the assault: perils, from the irregular Workings † of our own thoughts, and especially from the incursions of our spiritual enemy.

L 2

What

* Psal. cxxvii. 2.

† I think, it is reasonable only to a superintending and watchful Providence, that We are not hurried, when our imagination is heated, and our reason stupified

What dreadful mischief might that restless, that implacable Adversary of Mankind work, were there not an invisible hand to controul his rage, and protect poor mortals ! What scenes of horror might he represent to our imaginations, and, “ scare us with
dreams

fied by dreams, into the most pernicious actions.—We have sometimes heard of unfortunate persons, who, walking in their sleep, have thrown themselves headlong from a window, and been dashed to death on the pebbles. And whence is it, that such disastrous accidents are only related as pieces of news, not experienced by ourselves, or our families ? Were our minds more sober in their operations, or more circumspect in their regard ? No verily ; Nothing could be more wild, than their excursions ; none more inattentive to their own welfare. Therefore, if we have laid Us down, and slept in peace ; it was, because the LORD vouchsafed Us the sweet refreshment : if We rose again in safety ; it was, because the LORD sustained Us with his unremitted protection.

Will the candid reader excuse me, if I add a short story, or rather a Matter of Fact, which I know to be true ?—Two persons, that had been hunting together in the day, slept together the following night. One of them was renewing the pursuit in his dream ; and having run the whole circle of the chase, came, at last, to the fall of the Stag. Upon this, he cries out with a determined ardor ; ‘ I’ll kill him : I’ll kill him : ’ and immediately feels for the knife, which he carries in his pocket. His companion happening to be awake, and observing what passed, leaped from the bed ; and, being secure from danger, stood (for the moon shined in the room) to view the event. When, to his inexpressible surprize, the infatuated sportsman gave several deadly stabs in the very place, where, a moment before, the throat and the life of his friend lay.—This I mention, as a proof, that nothing hinders Us, even from being Assassins of Others ; or Murderers of Ourselves, amidst the mad sallies of sleep ; only the preventing Care of our heavenly Father.

dreams, or terrify us with visions*." But the Keeper of Israel, who never slumbers, nor sleeps, interposes in our behalf; at once to cherish us under his wings, and to defend us with a Shield. It is said of Solomon, "That threescore valiant men were about his bed; all expert in war; every one with his sword upon his thigh, because of fear in the night†." But one greater than Solomon; one mightier than myriads of armed hosts; even the great JEHOVAH, in whom is everlasting strength; He vouchsafes to watch over our sleeping minutes, and to stop all the avenues of ill.—Oh! the unwearied and condescending goodness of our Creator! Who lulls us to our rest, by bringing on the silent shades; and plants his own ever-watchful eye as our Centinel, while we enjoy the needful repose.

REASON, now, resigns her senate office; and Fancy, extravagant Fancy, leads the mind through a Maze of Vanity. The head is crouded with false images, and tantalized with the most ridiculous misapprehension of things. Some are expatiating amidst Fairy Fields, and gathering garlands of visionary Bliss; while their bodies are stretched on a wisp of straw, and sheltered by the cobwebs of a Barn. Others, quite insensible of their rooms of state, are mourning in a doleful Dungeon, or struggling with the raging billows. Perhaps, with hasty steps, they climb the craggy cliff; and, with real anxiety, fly from the imaginary danger. Or else, benumbed with sudden fear, and finding themselves

L 3

unable

* What a complete master that malignant spirit is in exhibiting visionary representations, appears from his conduct towards CHRIST, on the high mountain; and that he is too ready, if not restrained by an over-ruling Power, to employ his dexterity in afflicting Mankind, is evident from his treatment of Job. See Luke iv. 5. Job vii. 14.

† Cant. ii. 7, 8.

unable to escape, they give up at once their hopes and their efforts; and, though reclined on a couch of Ivory, are sinking, all helpless and distressed, in the furious Whirlpool. So unaccountable are the Vagaries of the Brain, while sleep maintains its dominion over the limbs!

BUT is this the only season, when absurd and incoherent irregularities play their magic on our minds? Are there not those who dream, even in their walking moments?—Some pride themselves in a notion of superior Excellency, because the royal favour has annexed a few splendid titles to their names; or because the dying Silk-worm has bequeathed her finest threads, to cover their nakedness.—Others congratulate their own signal Happiness, because the loads of golden Lumber are amassed together in their Coffers; or promise themselves a most superlative felicity indeed, when some thousands more are added to the useless heap.—Nor are there wanting others, who gape after substantial satisfaction from airy applause; and flatter themselves with, I know not what, immortality in the momentary buz of renown. Are any of these a whit more reasonable in their Opinions, than the poor ragged wretch in his Reveries; who, while snoring under a hedge, exults in a possession of his stately palace, and sumptuous furniture?—If persons, who are very Vassals to their own domineering passions, and led captive by numberless temptations: if these persons pique themselves with a conceit of their Liberty, and fancy themselves the generous and gallant Spirits of the age: where is the difference between theirs, and the Madman's Phrenzy: who, though chained to the floor, is throned in thought, and wielding an imaginary sceptre?—In a word; as many as borrow their dignity from a plume of feathers, or the gaudy trappings

trappings of fortune ; as many as send their souls to seek for bliss in the blandishments of sense, or in any thing short of the divine favour, and a well-grounded hope of the incorruptible inheritance * ; what are they, but dreamers with their eyes open ; delirious though in Health ?

WOULD you see the Picture, drawn to the very Life ; and the success of their Schemes, calculated with the utmost Exactness ; cast your eye upon that fine representation, exhibited by the Prophet : “ It shall be even as when a hungry Man dreameth, and behold, he eateth ; but he awaketh, and his Soul is empty : Or as when a thirsty Man dreameth, and behold, he drinketh ; but he awaketh, and behold he is faint, and his Soul hath Appetite †.” Such is the Race, and such the Prize, of all those Candidates for Honour and Joy ; who run wide of the mark of the high calling of GOD, in CHRIST JESUS. They live in vanity, and die in woe.——Awaken us, merciful LORD, from these moon-tide Trances ! Awaken us while conviction may turn to our advantage, and not serve only to increase our torment. O ! let our “ eyes be enlightened, to discern the things that are excellent ;” and no longer be imposed upon by fantastic appearances, which, however pompous they may seem, will prove more empty than the visions of the night, more transient than the dream that is forgotten.

HAVING mentioned Sleep and Dreams, let me once again consider those remarkable incidents of our frame : so very remarkable, that I may venture to call them a kind of experimental Mystery, and little less than a standing Miracle——Behold the most

L 4

vigorous

* These give a sacred, and home-felt delight,
A sober Certainty of waking bliss.

MILT. COMUS.

† Isa. xxix. 8.

vigorous Constitution, when stretched on the bed of ease, and totally resigned to the slumbers of the night. Its activity is oppressed with fetters of indolence; its strength is consigned over to a temporary annihilation; the nerves are like a Bow unstrung, and the whole animal system like a motionless Log. — Behold a person of the most delicate Sensations, and amiable Dispositions. His eyes, though thrown wide open, admit not the visual rays; at least distinguish not objects. His ears, with the organs unimpaired, and articulate accents beating upon the drum, perceive not the sound; at least, apprehend not the meaning. The senses and their exquisitely fine feelings are overwhelmed with an unaccountable stupefaction. You call him a social creature; but where are his social affections? He knows not the father that begat him; and takes no notice of the friend, that is his own soul. The wife of his bosom may expire by his side, and he lie unconcerned as a Barbarian. The children of his body may be tortured with the severest pangs; and He, even in the same chamber, remain untouched with the least commiseration. — Behold the most ingenious Scholar; whose judgment is piercing, and able to trace the most intricate difficulties of science; his taste refined, and quick to relish all the beauties of sentiment and composition. Yet at this juncture, the thinking faculties are unhinged, and the intellectual œconomy quite disconcerted. Instead of close-connected reasonings, nothing but a disjointed huddle of absurd ideas; instead of well-digested principles, nothing but a disorderly jumble of crude conceptions. The most palpable delusions impose upon his imagination. The whole night passes, and he frequently mistakes it for a single minute: is not sensible of the transi-
tion, hardly sensible of any duration.

YET,

YET, no sooner does the morning draw back his curtain, and day-light fill the room; but he awakes, and finds himself possessed of all the valuable endowments; which, for several hours, were suspended, or lost. He feels his sinews braced, and fit for action: his senses are alert and keen. The frozen affections melt with tenderness: the romantic visionary brightens into the master of reason. And, what is beyond measure surprising, the intoxicated mind works itself sober, not by slow degrees; but in the twinkling of an eye recovers from its perturbation.—Why does not the numbness, that seizes the animal powers, continue; and chain the limbs, in a perpetual listless inability? Why does not the stupor, that deadens all the nice operations of the senses, hold fast its possession? When the thoughts are once disadjusted, why are they not always in confusion? How is it, that they are rallied in a moment; and, from the wildest irregularity, reduced to the most orderly array?—From an inactivity, resembling death; and from extravagancies, little differing from madness; how is the body so suddenly restored, to vigour and agility? How is the understanding instantaneously re-established, in sedateness and harmony?—Surely, “this is the Lord’s doing, and it should be marvelous in our eyes:” should awaken our gratitude, and inspirit our praise.

THIS is the time, in which ghosts are supposed to make their appearance. Now the timorous imagination teems with phantoms, and creates numberless terrors to itself. Now, dreary forms, in sullen state, stalk along the gloom; or, swifter than lightning, glide across the shades. Now, voices more than mortal * are heard from the echoing vaults;

L 5

* Vox quoque per lucos vulgo exaudita silentes
Ingens et simulacra modis pallentia miris
Visa sub obscurum noctis.

VIRG.

vaults, and groans issue from the hollow tombs. Now, melancholy spectres visit the ruins of antient monasteries, and frequent the solitary dwellings of the dead. They pass and repass, in unsubstantial images, along the forsaken galleries; or take their determined stand, over some lamented grave.—How often has the school-boy fetched a long circuit, and trudged many a needless step, in order to avoid the haunted church-yard? Or, if necessity has obliged him to cross the spot; where human skulls are lodged below, and the baleful yew's shed supernumerary horrors above; a thousand hideous stories rush into his memory; fear adds wings to his feet; he scarce touches the ground; dares not once look behind him; and blesses his good fortune, if no frightful sound purred at his heels, if no ghastly shape bolted upon his sight †.

'Tis strange, to observe the excessive timidity, that possesses many people's minds, on this fanciful occasion; while they are void of all concern, on others of the most tremendous Import. Those, who are startled, in any dark and lonely walk, at the very apprehension of a single spectre, are nevertheless unimpressed at the sure prospect, of entering into a whole world of disembodied beings. Nay, are without any emotions of awe, though they know themselves to be hastening into the presence of the great, infinite, and eternal Spirit.—Should some pale messenger from the regions of the dead draw back our curtains at the hour of midnight; and, appointing some particular place, say, as the horrid apparition to Brutus, *I'll meet thee there* ‡: I believe, the

† See that valuable poem, stiled, *THE GRAVE*.

‡ The story of Brutus, and his evil Genius, is well known. Nor must it be denied that the precise words of the spectre to the Hero were, '*I'll meet thee at Philippi*.' But as this would not answer my purpose, I was obliged to make an alteration in the circumstances of place.

the boldest heart would feel something like a panic; would seriously think upon the adventure, and be in pain for the event. But, when a voice from heaven cries, in the awakening language of the prophet, "Prepare to meet thy GOD, O Israel†;" how little is the warning regarded! How soon is it forgot! Preposterous stupidity! To be utterly unconcerned, where it is the truest wisdom to take the alarm; and to be all trepidation, where there is nothing really terrible.—Do thou, my soul, remember thy Saviour's admonition; "I will forewarn you, whom ye shall fear. Fear not these imaginary horrors of the night: but fear, that awful Being; whose revelation of himself, though with expressions of peculiar mercy, made Moses, his favourite servant tremble exceedingly: whose manifestation, with purposes of inexorable vengeance, will make mighty Conquerors, that were familiar with dangers and estranged to dismay, call upon the mountains to fall on them, and the rocks to cover them: The menace of whose majestic eye when he comes attended with thousand thousands of his immortal hosts, will make the very heavens cleave asunder, and the world flee away!—O! dread his Displeasure; secure his Favour; and then thou may'st commit all thy other anxieties to the wind; Thou may'st laugh at every other fear."

THIS brings to my mind a memorable and amazing occurrence, recorded in the book of Job‡: which is, I think, no inconsiderable proof of the real Existence of apparitions¶, on some very extraordinary

† Amos iv. 12.

‡ Job iv. 12, 14, &c.

¶ Proof of the real existence of apparitions.—If the sense, in which I have always understood this passage be true—Eliphaz, I apprehend, was neither in a trance, nor in a dream, but perfectly awake.—Though he speaks

traordinary Emergencies ; while it discountenances those legions of idle tales, which superstition has raised, and credulity received. Since it teaches us, that if, at any time, those visitants from the unknown world, render themselves perceivable by mortals, it is not upon any errand of frivolous consequence ; but, to convey Intelligences of the utmost moment, or to work Impressions of the highest advantage.

'Twas in the Dead of Night. All nature lay shrouded in darkness. Every creature was buried in sleep. The most profound silence reigned through the universe. In these solemn moments, Eliphaz alone, all wakeful and solitary, was musing upon sublime and heavenly subjects.——When, lo ! an awful being, from the invisible realm, burst into his

speaks of sleep ; he speaks of it, as fallen not upon himself but upon other men. He does not mention dreams, though חלומות *Somnia*, would have suited the verse (if the book be in metre) altogether as well as חִיבוֹת *Visiones*.——It could not, I think, be a *Wind*, as some translate the word דָּוָן. Because, the circumstance of standing still, is not so compatible with the nature of a wind ; and a wind would have passed above him ; all around him, as well as before him ; not to add, how low a remark it is, and how unworthy of a place in so august a description, that he could not discern the form of a wind.——It seems therefore, to have been a real spirit, either angelical, as were those, which presented themselves to Abraham resting at the door of his tent, and to Lot sitting in the gate of Sodom ; or else, the spirit of some departed saint, as in the case of Samuel's apparition, or the famous appearance of Moses and Elijah on the mount of transfiguration.——A spirit, assuming some vehicle, in order to become visible to the human eye. Which accordingly Eliphaz saw, exhibiting itself as an object of sight. But saw so obscurely, and indistinctly, as not to be able, either to describe its aspect, or discern whom it resembled.

his apartment *. “A spirit passed before his face.” Astonishment seized the beholder. His bones shivered within him; his flesh trembled all over him; and the hair of his head stood erect with horror.—Sudden, and unexpected, was the Appearance of the phantom; but not such its Departure. It stood still, to present itself more fully to his view. It made a solemn pause, to prepare his mind for some momentous message.—After which a Voice was heard; a voice, for the importance of its meaning, worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance; for the solemnity of its delivery, enough to alarm a heart of stone. It spoke; and this was the purport of its words;—“Shall man, frail and wretched man, be just before the mighty God? Shall even the most upright and accomplished of mortals be pure in the sight of his Maker†? Behold, and consider it attentively. He put no such trust

* I have given this solemn Picture a modern dress, rather for the sake of variety and illustration, than from any apprehension of improving the admirable original. Such an attempt, I am sensible, would be more absurd, than to lacquer gold, or paint the diamond. The description, in Eliphaz’s own language, is awful and affecting to the last degree. A Night-Piece, dressed in all the circumstances of the deepest horror. I question, whether Shakespear himself, though so peculiarly happy for his great command of terrifying images, has any thing superior or comparable to this: The judges of fine composition see the masterly strokes; and, I believe, the most ordinary reader feels them, chilling his blood, and awakening emotions of dread in his mind.

† There seem to be a significant and beautiful gradation in the Hebrew words אָבֹר and גָּבֹר, which I have endeavoured to preserve, by a sort of paraphrastic version.—The reader will observe a new turn given to the sentiment, and much nobler than that which our English

trust in his most exalted servants, as should bespeak them altogether incapable of defect, or authorize them to arrogate any honour to themselves. And his very angels, without the least injury to their character, He charged with Folly; as sinking, even in the highest perfection of their holiness, infinitely beneath his transcendent glories; as falling, even in all the fidelity of their obedience, inexpressibly short of the homage due to his most adorable Majesty. And, if angelic nature must not presume to justify either themselves, or their services, before immaculate, and uncreated purity; how much less doth such a carriage become Them that dwell in Houses of Clay; whose original is from the dust, and whose state is all imperfection!"

I WOULD observe from hence, the very singular necessity of that Poverty of Spirit, which intirely renounces its own attainments; and, consequently, submits to the righteousness of the incarnate God. To inculcate this lesson, the Son of the Blessed came down from heaven; and pressed no other principle, with so repeated * an importunity, on his hearers. To instil the same doctrine, the HOLY GHOST touched the lips of the Apostles with
sacred

English translation exhibits. The passage, thus rendered, speaks a truth incomparably more weighty and needful to be inculcated. A truth, exactly parallel to that humbling confession of the prophet, "We are all
" as an unclean thing;" and to that solemn declaration of the psalmist, "In thy sight shall no man living
" be justified." Vide Schult. in loc.

* It is well worthy of our observation, says an excellent commentator, That no one sentence uttered by our Lord, is so frequently repeated as this: "Whosoever shall exalt himself, shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself, shall be exalted:" Which occurs at least ten times in the Evangelist.

sacred eloquence; and made it an eminent part of their commission, "to bring down every high imagination." That no expedient might be wanting, to give it a deep and lasting efficacy on the human mind; a phantom arises from the valley of the shadow of death, or a teacher descends from the habitation of spirits.—Whatever then we neglect; let us not neglect to cultivate this Grace, which has been so variously taught, so powerfully enforced.

HARK! a doleful voice—With sudden starts, and hideous screams, it disturbs the silence of the peaceful night. 'Tis the Screech Owl, sometimes in frantic, sometimes in disconsolate accents, uttering her woes†.—She flies the vocal grove, and shuns the society of all the feathered choir. The blooming gardens, and flowry meads, have no charms for her. Obscene shades, ragged ruins, and walls overgrown with ivy, are her favourite haunts. Above, the mouldering precipice nods, and threatens a fall; below, the toad crawls, or the poisonous adder hisses. The sprightly morning, which awakens other animals into joy, administers no pleasure to this gloomy Recluse. Even the smiling face of day is her aversion; and all its lovely scenes create nothing but uneasiness.

So, just so, would it fare with the ungodly; were it possible to suppose their admission, into the chaste and bright abodes of endless Felicity. They would find nothing but disappointment and shame, even at the fountain-head of happiness and honour. For how could

† "Solaque culminibus ferali carmine bubo

"Sæpe queri, longasque in fletum ducere voces."

Thus sung that charming Genius, that Prince of the ancient poets, that most consummate master of elegance and accuracy; all whose sentiments are Nature, whose every description is a picture, whose whole language is music.—Virgil.

could the tongue, habituated to profaneness, taste any delight in joining the harmonious adorations of heaven? How could the lips, cankered with slander, relish the raptures of everlasting praise? Where would be the satisfaction of the vain beauty, or the supercilious grandee? Since in the temple of the skies, no incense of flattery would be addressed to the one; nor any obsequious homage paid to the other. The transcendent, and immaculate purity of the blessed God would flash confusion on the lascivious eye. And the envious mind must be on a rack of self-tormenting passions; to observe millions of happy beings, shining in all the perfections of glory, and solacing themselves in the fulness of joy. In short, the un sanctified soul, amidst holy and triumphant spirits: even in the refined regions of bliss and immortality; would be like this melancholy bird dislodged from her darksome retirement, and imprisoned under the beams of day ‡.

THE

‡ I cannot forbear taking notice, with what admirable emphasis and propriety our Lord touches this important point, in his memorable conference with Nicodemus. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he CANNOT enter into the kingdom of heaven:" *q. d.* "I wave the authority of the Supreme Judge, and speak with the instructive condescension of a master in Israel. Though I might, without being liable to the least controul, pass it into a sovereign decree; That unrenewed mortals, who are slaves to corrupt appetite, SHALL NOT enter the habitations of the just; I rather chuse to represent it as a case utterly impossible; and charge the calamity not upon divine severity, but human folly. Such persons, from the very nature of things, preclude themselves; they incapacitate their own minds; and contrarieties must be reconciled, before they, in their unregenerate condition, can be partakers of those spiritual and sublime delights." John iii. 3.

THE voice of this creature screaming at our windows, or of the raven croaking over our roof, is, they say, a Token of approaching Death. There are persons who would regard such an incident, with no small degree of solicitude. Trivial as it is; it would damp their spirits, and, perhaps, break their rest.—One cannot but wonder, that people should suffer themselves to be affrighted at such fantastical, and yet be quite unaffected with real, presages of their dissolution. Real presages of this awful event address us from every quarter. What are these incumbent Glooms, that overwhelm the world, but a kind of Pall provided for nature; and an image of that long night, which will quickly cover the inhabitants of the whole earth? What an affinity has the sleep †, which will very soon weigh down my drowsy eye-lids, with that state of intire cessation, in which all my senses must be laid aside! The silent chamber, and the bed of slumber, are a very significant representative of the land, where all things are hushed; all things are forgotten.—What meant that deep Death-bell Note, which, the other evening, saddened the air? Laden with heaviest accent, it struck our ears, and seemed to knock at the door of our hearts. Surely, it brought a message to surviving mortals, and thus the tidings ran: “Mortals, the destroyer of your race is on his way. The last enemy has begun the chase; and is gaining ground upon you, every moment. His paths are strewn with heaps of slain. Even now, his javelin has laid one of your neighbours in the dust; and will soon, very soon, aim the *inevitable Blow* at every one of your lives.”

We need not go down to the charnel-house, nor carry our search into the repositories of the dead; in order to find memorials of our impending doom.

A mul-

† Et Consanguineus Lethi Sopor.

VIRG.

A multitude of these remembrancers are planted in all our paths, and point the heedless passengers to their long home. I can hardly enter a considerable town, but I meet the funeral procession, or the mourners going about the streets. The *Atchievement* suspended on the wall, or the Crape streaming in the air, are silent intimations; that both Rich and Poor have been emptying their houses, and replenishing the sepulchres. I can scarce join in any conversation, but mention is made of some that are given over by the physician, and hovering on the confines of eternity; of others, that have just left their clay amidst weeping friends, and are gone to appear before the judge of all the earth. There's not a News-paper comes into my hand; but, amidst all its entertaining narrations, reads several serious Lectures of Mortality. What else are the repeated accounts, of age, worn out by slow-consuming sicknesses; and of youth, dashed to pieces by some sudden stroke of casualty? Of patriots, exchanging their seats in the senate, for a lodging in the Tomb; of Misers, resigning their breath, and (O relentless destiny!) leaving their very riches for others? Even these vehicles of our amusement are registers of the deceased; and the voice of Fame seldom sounds, but in concert with a Knell.

THESE monitors croud every place; not so much as the scenes of our diversions excepted. What are the decorations of our public buildings and the most elegant furniture of our parlours; but the imagery of death, and trophies of the tomb? That marble bust; and those gilded pictures; how solemnly they recognize the fate of others, and speakingly remind us of our own!—I see; I hear! and Oh! I feel, this great truth. It is interwoven with my constitution. The frequent decays of the structure, fore-tel its final ruin. What are all the pains, that have been

been darted through my limbs; what every disease, that has assailed my health; but the advanced guards of the foe? What are the languors and weariness, that attend the labours of each revolving day; but the more secret practices of the adversary, slowly undermining the earthly tabernacle?

AMIDST so many notices, shall we go on thoughtless and unconcerned? Can none of these prognostics, which are sure as oracles, awaken our attention, and engage our circumspection? Noah, 'tis written, "being warned of God, prepared an ark." O! imitate this excellent example. Admonished by such a cloud of witnesses, be continually putting thyself in a readiness for the last change. Let not that day, of which thou hast so many infallible signs, come upon thee unawares.—Get the Ivy untwined, and thy affection disentangled from this enchanting world; that thou may'st be able to quit it, without reluctance. Get the dreadful Hand-writing cancelled, and all thy sins blotted out; that thou may'st depart in peace, and have nothing to fear at the decisive tribunal. Get, O! get thy soul interested in the Redeemer's Merits, and transformed into his sacred Image; then, shalt thou be meet for the inheritance of Saints in light, and may'st even desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ.

SOMETIMES, in my evening walk I have heard

" ———— The wakeful bird
 " Sing darkling, and, in shadiest covert hid,
 " Tune her nocturnal note †.

How different the Airs of this charming songster,
 from those harsh and boding Outcries! The little
 creature

† Milt. Par. lost. B. III. l. 38.

creature ran through all the variations of music; and shewed herself mistress of every grace, that constitutes or embellishes harmony. — Sometimes, she swells a manly throat, and her song kindles into ardor: the Tone is so bold, and strikes with such energy, that you would imagine the sprightly serenader in the very next thicket. Anon, the Strain languishes, and the mournful minstrel melts into tenderness: the melancholy notes just steal upon the shades, and faintly touch your ear; or, in soft and sadly-pleasing accents, seem to die along the distant vale. Silence is all attention; and night listens to the trilling tale.

WHAT an invitation is this, to slip away from the thronged city! This coy and modest minstrel entertains only the Lovers of Retirement. Those that are carousing over their bowls, or ranting at the riotous club, lose this feast of harmony. — In like manner, the pleasures of religion; the joy of reconciliation with God; the satisfaction arising from the unbounded, ravishing, prospect of a blissful immortality; these are all lost to the mind, that is ever in the Croud; and dares not, or delights not, to retire into itself. — Are we charmed with the nightingale's song? Do we wish to have it nearer, and hear it oftner? O! let us seek a renewed heart, and a resigned will; a conscience that whispers peace, and passions that are tuned by grace; then shall we never want a melody in our own Breasts, far more musically pleasing, than sweet Philomela's sweetest Strains.

As different as the voices of these birds, are the Circumstances of those few mortals, who continue awake. — Some are squandering, pearls, shall I say, or kingdoms? No; but what is unspeakably more precious, time. Squandering this inestimable talent,
with

with the most senseless and wanton prodigality. Not content with allowing a few spare minutes, for the purpose of necessary recreation; they lavish many hours, devote whole nights, to that idle diversion of shuffling, ranging, and detaching, a set of painted pasteboards. — Others instead of this busy trifling, act the part of their own tormentors. They even picquet themselves * and call it amusement; they are torn by wild horses, and yet term it a sport. What else is the Gamester's practice, while his mind is held in the most anxious suspense, and agitated by the fiercest Extremes of hope and fear? While the dice are rattling, his heart is throbbing; his fortune is tottering; and, possibly, at the very next throw, the one sinks in the gulph of ruin, the other is hurried into the rage of distraction.

SOME snatched from the bloom of health, and the lap of plenty, are confined to the Chamber of Sickness. Where they are constrained (O sad alternative!) either to plunge into the everlasting world, in an unprepared Condition; or else, to think over all the Follies of a heedless life, and all the Bitterness of approaching death. The disease rages; it baffles the force of medicine; and urges the reluctant wretch, to the brink of the precipice. While furies rouse the conscience, and point at the bottomless pit below. — Perhaps, his drooping Mother deprived long ago of the husband of her bosom, and bereft of all her other offspring; is, even now, receiving the blow which consummates her misfortunes ¶. In vain, she tries to assuage the sorrows
of

* In allusion to a very painful punishment, inflicted on delinquents among the soldiery.

¶ This brings to my mind one of the deepest and most affecting Mourning Pieces, extant in writing. The sacred historian paints it in all the simplicity of style; and

of a beloved son ; in vain, she attempts, with her tender offices, to prolong a life, dearer than her own. He faints in her arms ; he bows his head ; he drops in death. The last pang, which dislodges the unwilling soul, rends an only Child, from the yearning embraces of a parent ; and tears away the support of her age from a disconsolate window.

WHILE Those long for a reprieve ; Others invite the stroke. Quite weary of the world, with a restless impatience, they sigh for dissolution. Some, pining away under the tedious decays of an incurable Consumption : or gasping for breath, and almost suffocated, amidst an Inundation of dropfical Waters. On some, a relentless Cancer has fastened its envenomed teeth ; and is gnawing them, though in the midst of bodily vigour, in the midst of pitying friends, gradually to death. Others are on a rack of agonies, by convulsive Fits of the Stone : Oh, how the pain writhes their limbs ; how the sweat

and yet in all the strength of colouring—" When Jesus " came nigh to the gate of the city, behold ! there " was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow."—What a beautiful gradation is here ! Every fresh circumstance is an additional aggravation of the calamity : Till, at length, the description is worked up into the most finished picture, of exquisite and inconsolable distress—He was a young Man : cut off in the flower of life, amidst a thousand gay expectations, and smiling hopes.—He was an only Son ; the afflicted mother's All : So that none remained to preserve the name, or perpetuate the family. And, what rendered the case still more deplorable, She was a Widow : Left intirely desolate ; abandoned to her woes, without any to share her sorrows, or comfort her under her misfortunes.—Is not this a fine sketch of the Picturesque ? Who can consider the narrative, with any attention ; and not feel his heart penetrated, with a tender commiseration ? Luke vii. 12.

sweat bedews their flesh, and their eye-balls wildly roll ! Methinks, the night condole with these her distressed children ; and sheds dewy Tears, over their sorrowful abodes — But, of all mortals, They are the most exquisitely miserable, who groan beneath the pressure, of a melancholy Mind ; or smart under the lashes, of a resentful Conscience. Though robed in ermine ; or covered with jewels ; the state of a slave chained to the galleys, or of an exile condemned to the mines, is a perfect paradise compared with theirs.

O ! that the Votaries of Mirth ; whose life is a continued round of merriment and whim ; would bestow one serious reflection, on this Variety of human Woes. It might render them less enamoured, with the few languid sweets, that are thinly scattered through this vale of tears, and are invironed with such a multitude of ragged thorns. It might teach them, no longer to dance away their years, with a giddy rambling impulse ; but to aspire with a determined Aim, after those happy regions, where delights, abundant and un-embittered, flow.

CAN there be circumstances, which a man of wisdom would more earnestly deprecate, than these several cases of grievous tribulation ? There are ; and, what is very astonishing, they are frequently the desire and the choice of those, who fancy themselves the sole heirs of happiness : Those I mean, who are launching out into the Depths of Extravagance, and running excessive Lengths of Riot ; who are prostituting their reputation, and sacrificing their peace, to their lusts : who are sapping the foundations of their health, in debaucheries ; and shipwrecking the interests of their families, in their bowls : and, what is worse, are forfeiting the joys of an eternal Heaven, for the sordid satisfactions of the beast ; for the transitory sensations

ons of an hour. — O ! ye slaves of appetite, how far am I from envying your inordinate revels ! Ah ! little are you sensible ; that while voluptuousness showers her roses, and luxury diffuses her odours ; they scatter Poisons also, and shed unheeded Bane†. Evils, incomparable more malignant, than the worm-wood and gall of the sharpest affliction. — Since death is in the drunkard's cup ; and worse than poniards in the harlot's embrace ; may it ever be the privilege of the man whom I love, to go without his share of these pestilential sweets ! ||

ABUNDANCE of living Sparks glitter in the lanes, and twinkle under the hedges. I suppose, they are the Glow-worms ; which have lighted their little lamps, and obtained leave, through the absence of the sun, to play a feeble beam. A faint glimmer, just serves to render them perceivable ; without tending at all to dissipate the shades, or making any amends for the departed day. — Should a traveller drooping with wet, and shivering with cold, hover round this Mimickry of Fire ; in order to dry his garments, and warm his benumbed limbs : Should some unfortunate rover ; groping for his way, in black and dark night, take one of these languid Tapers, as a light to his feet, and lantern to his paths : How certainly would both the one, and the other, be frustrated of their expectation ! — And are They more likely to succeed, who

† Yes ; in the flow'rs that wreathe the sparkling bowl, -

Fell adders hiss, and pois'nous serpents roll.

PRIOR's Sol.

|| “ Quam suave est suavitatibus istis carere ! ” — In this fine sentence, quoted from St. Augustine, there is much the same beautiful turn, and noble sentiment, as in those lines of Mr. Pope.

Count all th' advantage prosp'rous vice attains,
'Tis but what virtue flies from, and disdains.

who, neglecting that sovereign balm, which distilled from the cross, fly to any carnal diversion, to heal the anxiety of the mind? who, deaf to the infallible decisions of Revelation, resign themselves over to the erroneous conjectures of Reason in order to find the way that leadeth unto life? Or lastly, who apply to the froth of this vain world, for a satisfactory portion, and a substantial happiness? Their conduct is in no degree wiser; their disappointment equally sure; and their miscarriage infinitely more disastrous. To speak in the delicate language of a sacred writer, "They sow the wind, and will reap the whirlwind *."

To say the truth; the pleasures of the world, which we are all so prone to doat upon; and the powers of fallen Reason, which some are so apt to idolize†; are not only vain, but treacherous. Not
only

* Hof. viii. 7.

† I hope it will be observed, That I am far from decrying that noble faculty of reason, when exerted in her proper sphere; and acting in a deferential subordination to the revealed will of heaven. While she exercises her powers, within these appointed limits, she is unspeakably serviceable; and cannot be too industriously cultivated. But, when she sets herself up in proud contradistinction to the sacred oracles; when, all-arrogant and self-sufficient, she says to the word of Scripture, 'I have no need of thee:' She is then, I must be bold to maintain, not only a glow-worm, but an *ignis fatuus*; not only a bubble, but a snare.

May not this remark, with the strictest propriety, and without the least limitations, be applied to the generality of our modern romances, novels, and too many of our theatrical entertainments? These are commonly calculated, to inflame a wanton fancy; or, if conducted with so much modesty, as not to debauch the affections, they pervert the judgment, and bewilder the taste. By their incredible adventures; their extravagant parade of gallantry; and their characters, widely
M different

only a painted flame, like these sparkling animals; but much like those unctuous exhalations, which arise from the marshy ground, and often dance before the eyes of the benighted way-faring man. Kindled into a sort of fire, they personate a guide and seem to offer their service: but, blazing with delusive light, mislead their followers into hidden pits, headlong precipices, and unfathomable gulphs; where, far from his beloved friends, far from all hopes of succour, the unhappy wanderer is swallowed up, and lost.

Not long ago, we observed a very surprising appearance in the western sky. A prodigious star took its flaming route through those coasts; and trailed, as it passed, a tremendous length of fires, almost over half the heavens. Some, I imagine, viewed the portentous stranger, with much the same anxious amazement, as Belshazzar beheld the hand-writing upon the wall. Some looked upon it as a bloody * flag; hung out by divine resentment, over a guilty world. Some read, in its glaring visage, the fate of nations, and the fall of kingdoms†. To others, it shook, or seemed to shake, pestilence and war from its horrid hair.——For my own part, I am not so superstitious as to regard what every astrologer has to prognosticate; upon the accession of a comet, or the

different from truth and nature; they inspire foolish conceits; beget idle expectations; introduce a disgust of genuine history; and indispose their admirers, to acquiesce in the decent civilities, or to relish the sober satisfactions of common life.

* — Liquida si quando nocte cometæ
Sanguinei lugubre rubent.——

Virg.

† — Crinemque timendi
Sideris, & terris mutantem regna cometem.

Lucr.

the awful projection of its huge vapoury train. Nothing can be more precarious and unjustifiable, than to draw such conclusions from such events; since they are neither preternatural effects, nor do they throw the frame of things into any disorder. I would rather adore that omnipotent Being, who rolled those stupendous orbs from his creating hand; and leads them, by his providential eye, through unmeasurable tracts of æther: Who bids them now approach the sun, and glow with unsufferable ardors †; now, retreat to the utmost bounds of our planetary system, and make their entry among other worlds.

THEY are harmless visitants. I acquit them from the charge of causing, or being accessory to, desolating plagues. Would to God there were no other more formidable indications, or approaching judgments, or impending ruin! But alas! when vice becomes predominant, and irreligion almost epidemical; when the sabbaths of a jealous God are notoriously profaned; and that "Name, which is great, wonderful, and holy," is prostituted to the meanest, or abused to the most execrable purposes; when the worship of the great Creator and Preserver of mankind is banished, from many of the most conspicuous families; and it is deemed a piece of rude impertinence, so much as to mention the gracious Redeemer, in our genteel interviews; when it passes for an elegant freedom of behaviour, to ridicule the mysteries of Christianity;

M 2

anity;

† "The comet in the year 1680, according to Sir Isaac Newton's computation, was, in its nearest approach, above 166 times nearer the sun than the earth is. Consequently, its heat was then 28000 times greater than that of summer. So that a ball of iron as big as the earth, heated by it, would hardly become cool in 50000 years." Derh. Astr. Theol. p. 237.

anity; and a species of refined conversation, to taint the air with lascivious hints; when those that sit in the scorner's chair, sin with a high hand; and many of those that wear the professor's garb, are destitute of the power, and content themselves with the mere form of godliness; when such is the state of a community, there is reason, too apparent reason, to be horribly afraid. Such phenomena, abounding in the moral world, are not fanciful, but real omens. Will not an injured God "be avenged on such a nation as this? Will he not be provoked to sweep them with the besom of destruction *?"

O! that the inhabitants of Great-Britain would lay these alarming considerations to heart! The Lord of Hosts has commanded the sword of civil discord to return into its sheath. But have we returned, every one from his evil ways? Are we become a renewed people, devoted to a dying Saviour; and zealous of good works?—What mean those peals of sobs, which burst from the expiring cattle?—What mean those melancholy moans, where the lusty droves were wont to low †? What mean those arrows of untimely death, discharged on

* Isa. xiv. 23. The eternal Sovereign, speaking of Babylon, denounces this threatening, 'I will sweep it with the besom of destruction.'—What a noble, but dreadful image, is here! How strongly and awfully portrayed! How pregnant also in its signification! intimating at once the vile nature, the total extirpation, of this wicked people; and the perfect ease, with which the glorious God would execute his intended vengeance.

† If these papers should be so fortunate, as to outlive their Author; perhaps it may be needful to inform posterity, that the above-mentioned hints, allude to a most terrible, contagious, and mortal distemper, raging at the time of writing them, among the horned cattle, in various parts of the kingdom.

on our innocent and useful animals? Are not these the weapons of divine displeasure, and manifest chastisements of a sinful generation†? Has not God, the “God to whom vengeance belongeth,” still a controversy with our land? And who can tell where the visitation will end? What a storm may follow these prelusive drops? O! that we may “hear the rod, and who hath appointed it!” Taught by these penal effects of our disobedience, may we remove the accursed thing from our tents; our practices; our hearts! May we turn from all ungodliness, before wrath come upon us to the utmost; before iniquity prove our ruin!

SOMETIMES, at this hour, another most remarkable sight amuses the curious, and alarms the vulgar. A blaze of lambent meteors is kindled; or some very extraordinary lights are refracted, in the quarters of the north. Sometimes, the radiant streamers meet and mingle; insomuch, that the air seems to be all conflicting fire: At other times, they start from one another; and, like legions in precipitate flight, sweep, each a separate way, through the firmament. Now, they are quiescent; anon, they are thrown into a quivering motion; presently, a nimble glance diffuses them over the whole hemisphere. Sometimes, with an aspect awfully ludicrous, they represent extravagant and antic vagaries; at other times, you would suspect, that some invisible power was playing off the artillery of the skies, and giving us the flash, without the noise.

M 3

THE

† “Hinc lætis vituli vulgo moriuntur in herbis,
Et dulces animas plena ad præsepia reddunt.
Balatu hinc pecorum & crebris mugitibus amnes,
Arentesque sonant ripæ, collesque supini.” VIRG.

THE villagers gaze at the spectacle, first with wonder, then with horror. A general panic seizes the country. Every heart throbs, and every face is pale. The crouds that flock together, instead of diminishing, increase the dread. They catch contagion, from each other's looks and words; while fear is in every eye, and every tongue speaks the language of terror. Some see hideous shapes, armies mixing in fierce encounter, or fields swimming with blood. Some foresee direful events, states overthrown, or mighty monarchs tottering on their thrones. Others, scared with still more frightful apprehensions, think of nothing but the day of doom. "Sure, says one, the unalterable hour is struck, and the end of all things come.—See, replies another, how the blasted stars look wan! Are not these the signs of the Son of man, coming in the clouds of heaven?—Jesus prepare us, cries a third, and lifts his eyes in devotion, for the archangel's trump, and the great tribunal!"

IF this waving brightness, which plays innocently over our heads, be so amazing to multitudes; what inexpressible consternation must overwhelm unthinking mortals, when the general conflagration commences? The day, the dreadful day, is approaching, "In the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements

§ 2 Pet. iii. 10. I have often thought this verse an eminent instance of that kind of beautiful writing, in which the very sound bears a sort of significancy; at least, carries an exact correspondence with the sense. The original expression—*εοικηδον*—is one of the hoarsest and deepest words in language. Nothing could be more exquisitely adapted to affect the ear, as well as impress the imagination, with the wreck of nature, and the crash of a falling world.—I scarce ever read this clause, but it brings to my mind that admired description in Milton; —On

ments shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up." That mighty hand, which once opened the windows from on high, and broke up the fountains of the great deep, will then unlock all the magazines of fire, and pour a second deluge upon the whole earth. The vengeful flames, kindled by the breath of the Almighty, spread themselves from the centre to the circumference. Nothing can withstand their impetuosity; nothing can escape their rage. Universal desolation attends their progress. Magnificent palaces, and solemn temples, are laid in ashes. Spacious cities, and impregnable towers, are mingled in one smoking mass. Not only the productions of human art, but the works of Almighty power, are fuel for the devouring element. The everlasting mountains melt, like the snows which cover their summit. Even vast oceans serve only to augment the inconceivable rapidity and fury of the blaze.—O! how shall I, or others, stand undismayed amidst the glare of a burning world; unless the LORD JEHOVAH be our defence? How shall we be upheld in security, when the globe itself is sinking in a fiery ruin; unless the Rock of Ages be our support?

BEHOLD! a new spectacle of wonder! The moon is making her entry into the sky. See her

M 4

rising

———On a sudden open fly
With impetuous recoil, and jarring sound,
Th' infernal doors, and on their hinges grate
Harsh thunder———

Book II. l. 879.

It is a pleasing employ, and one of the noblest offices of true criticism, to point out these inferior recommendations of the sacred Classics. Though I believe, the inspired writers themselves, amidst all the elevation and magnificence of their divine ideas, disdained a scrupulous attention to such little niceties of style.

rising in clouded majesty : All grand and stately, but somewhat sullied in her aspect. However, she brightens, as she advances; and grows clearer, as she climbs higher : Till at length, her silver loses all its dross; she unveils her peerless light; and becomes “ the beauty of heaven, the glory of the stars†;” delighting every eye, and clearing the whole world, with the brightness of her appearance, and the softness of her splendors.— O ! thou queen of the shades ! may it be my ambition to follow this thy instructive example ! while others are fond to transcribe the fashions of little courts, and to mimic personages of inferior state ; be it mine to imitate thy improving purity ! May my conduct become more unblemished, and my temper more refined ; as I proceed, farther, in my probationary course ! May every sordid desire wear away, and every irregular appetite be gradually lost ; as I make nearer approaches to the celestial mansions ! Will not this be a comfortable evidence, that I too shall shine, in my adored Redeemer’s kingdom ? Shine, with a richer lustre, than that which radiates from thy resplendent orb ; shine, with unfading lustre, when every ray, that beams from thy beauteous sphere, is totally extinguished ?

THE day afforded us a variety of entertaining sights. These were all withdrawn, at the approach of darkness. The stars, kindly officious, immediately lent us their aid. This served to alleviate the frown of night ; not to recover the objects from their obscurity. A faint ray, scarcely reflected, and not from the entire surface of things, gave the straining eye a very imperfect glimpse ; such as rather mocked, than satisfied vision.—

But,

† Eccclus xliii. 9.

———— ‘ Lucidum cœli decus.’

But, now the Moon is risen, and has collected all her beams, the veil is again taken off from the countenance of nature. We once again behold the world's great picture; not indeed in its late lively colours, but more delicately shaded, and arrayed in softer charms*.

WHAT a majestic Scene is here! how incomparably grand, and exquisitely fine!—The Moon, like an immense crystal Lamp, pendent in the magnificent cieling of the Heavens. The Stars, like so many thousands of golden tapers, fixed in their azure sockets; all pouring their lustre on spacious cities, and lofty mountains; glittering on the ocean; gleaming on the forest; and opening a prospect, wide as the eye can glance, more various than fancy can paint†.—We are forward to admire the performances of human art. A landscape, elegantly designed, and sketched out with a masterly hand; a

M 5

piece

* ————— Now reigns

Full-orb'd the Moon, and with more pleasing light
Shadowy sets off the face of things. MILT.

† As when the Moon, refulgent lamp of night,
O'er heaven's clear azure spreads her sacred light;
When not a breath disturbs the deep serene,
And not a cloud o'ercasts the solemn scene;
Around her throne the vivid planets roll,
And stars unnumber'd gild the glowing pole;
O'er the dark trees a yellower verdure shed,
And tip with silver ev'ry mountain's head;
Then shine the vales, the rocks in prospect rise;
A flood of glory bursts from all the skies;
The conscious swains, rejoicing in the sight,
Eye the blue vault, and bless the useful light.

Iliad VIII.

I transcribe these lines, because Mr. Pope says, They exhibit, in the original, the finest night-piece in poetry. And, if they are so beautiful in Homer's language; who can suspect their suffering any disadvantage from the pen of his admirable translator?

piece of statuary, that seems, amidst all the recommendations of exact proportion, and graceful attitude, to soften into flesh, and almost breathe with life; these little imitations of nature we behold with a pleasing surprize. And shall we be less affected, less delighted, with the inexpressibly noble, and completely finished Original?—The ample dimensions of Ranelagh's Dome; the gay illuminations of Vaux-Hall Grove; I should scorn to mention on such an occasion; were they not the objects of general admiration. Shall we be charmed with those puny Effays of finite ingenuity; and touched with no transport, at this stupendous display of Omnipotent skill? at the august grandeur, and shining stateliness, of the firmament? that forms an alcove for ten thousand worlds, and is ornamented with myriads of everlasting luminaries.—— Surely, this must betray, not only a total Want of Religion; but the most abject littleness of mind, and the utmost Poverty of Genius.

THE Moon is not merely “an Ornament in the high places of the LORD;” but of signal service to the inhabitants of the earth.—— How uncomfortable is deep, pitchy, total darkness! especially in the long absence of the Winter's Sun. Welcome therefore, thrice welcome, this auspicious gift of Providence; to enliven the nocturnal gloom, and line with silver the raven-coloured mantle of night; —— How desirable to have our Summer-Evenings illuminated! that we may be able to tread the dewy meads, and breathe the delicious fragrancy of our gardens; especially, when the sultry heats render it irksome and fatiguing, to walk abroad by day.— How chearing to the Shepherd the use of this universal lantern; as he tends his fleecy charge, or late consigns them to their hurdled cots! How pleasing

to the Mariner, as he plows the midnight main, to adjust the tackling, and explore his way, under the influence of this beaming scone!—For these, and other beneficial purposes, the hand of the ALMIGHTY has hung the stately branch on high; and filled it with a splendor, not confined to a single edifice, or commensurate to a particular square, but diffusive as the whole extent of the hemisphere.

THE most faithful of our inferior servants are sometimes tardy in their office; sometimes negligent of their duty; but this celestial attendant is most exactly punctual, at all the stated periods of her ministration. If we choose to prolong our journey, after the sun is gone down; the Moon, during her whole increase, is always ready to act in the capacity of a guide. If we are inclined to set out, very early in the morning; the moon, in her decrease, prevents the dawn, in order to offer her assistance. And, because it is so pleasant a thing for the eyes to behold the light; the moon at her full, by a course of unintermitted waiting, never fails to give us, as it were, a double day.—How apparently has the divine wisdom interested itself, in providing even for the pleasurable accommodation of man! How desirous, that he should want no piece of commodious furniture; no kind of delightful convenience! And, in prosecution of these benevolent intentions, has annexed so valuable an appendage to the terrestrial globe.—Justly, therefore, does the Psalmist celebrate that admirable constitution, which ordained the moon and the stars to govern the night, as an instance of rich goodness; of mercy, which endureth for ever†.

THE moon, it is confessed, is no luminous body. All the brightness, which beautifies her countenance,

† Psal. cxxxvi. 9.

nance, is originally in the sun, and no more than transmissively in her. That glorious orb is the parent of day, and the palace of light. From thence, the morning-star gilds her horn *; from thence, the planetary circles are crowned with lustre; and from thence, the moon derives all her silver radiance.

——It is pleasing to reflect, that such is the case with the all-sufficient redeemer, and his dependent people. We are replenished from his fulness. What do we possess, which we have not received; and what can we desire, which we may not expect; from that never-failing source of all good? He is the author of our faith, and the former of our graces. In his unspotted life, we see the path; in his meritorious death, the price; and in his triumphant resurrection, the proof of bliss and immortality. If we offend, and fall seven times a day; He is the LORD our peace †. If we are depraved, and our best deeds very unworthy; He is the LORD our righteousness ‡. If we are blind, and even brutish in heavenly knowledge; He is the LORD our wisdom §; his word dispels the shades; his spirit scatters the intellectual gloom; his eye looks our darkness into day. In short, we are nothing, and “CHRIST is all.” Worse than defective in ourselves, “we are complete in him.” So that if we shine, it is with delegated rays, and borrowed light. We act by a strength, and glory in merits, not our own.

* I might to justify this expression, observe, that the planet Venus, commonly called the Morning-Star, is found, by the Telescopes, frequently to appear horned; or to have a crescent of light, somewhat like the moon, a little before or after her conjunction. But this would be a remark, too deep and refined for my scheme; which proceeds only upon a superficial knowledge, and the most obvious appearances of nature.

† Judg. vi. 27.

‡ Jer. xxiii. 6.

§ 1 Cor. i. 30.

own.—O! may we be thoroughly sensible of our dependence on the Saviour! May we constantly imbibe his propitious beams; and never, by indulging belief, or back-sliding into folly, withdraw our souls from his benign influences! lest we lose our comfort, and our holiness; as the fair ruler of the night loses her splendor, when her urn is turned from its fountain*, and receives no more communications of solar effulgence.

THE moon is incessantly varying, either in her aspect, or her stages.—Sometimes, her face is all lustre. Anon, a radiant crescent adorns her brow. Soon, it dwindles into a slender streak. 'Till at length, all her beauty vanishes, and she becomes a beamful orb.—Sometimes, she rises with the descending day; and begins her procession, amidst admiring multitudes. Ere long, she defers her progress till the midnight watches; and steals, unobserved, upon the sleeping world.—Sometimes, she just appears, on the edges of the western Horizon, and drops us a ceremonious visit. Within a while, she sets out on her nightly tour, from the opposite regions of the east; traverses the whole hemisphere; and never offers to withdraw, till the more refulgent partner of her sway renders her presence unnecessary.—In a word, she is, while conversant among us, still waxing or waning, and “never continueth in one stay.”

SUCH is the moon; and such are all sublunary things; exposed to perpetual vicissitudes—How often, and how soon, have the faint echoes of renown slept in silence; or been converted into the clamours

* Alluding to those truly poetical lines in Milton, Hither, as to their fountain, other stars, Repairing, in their golden urns draw light.

Par. Lost. B. VII. l. 364.

clamours of obloquy! the same lips, almost with the same breath, cry Hosanna and crucify!—Have not riches confessed their notorious uncertainty, a thousand and a thousand times? Either melting away, like snow in our hands, by insensible degrees; or escaping, like a winged prisoner from its cage, with a precipitate flight. —Have we not known the bridegroom's closet, an antechamber to the tomb; and heard the voice, that so lately pronounced the sparkling pair husband and wife, proclaim an everlasting divorce; and seal the decree with that solemn asseveration, “ashes to ashes, dust to dust?”—Our friends, though the medicine of life; our health, though the balm of nature; are a most precarious possession. How soon may the one become a corpse in our arms; and how easily is the other destroyed in its vigour!—You have seen, no doubt, a set of pretty painted birds, perching on your trees, or sporting in your meadows. You were pleased with the lovely visitants, that brought beauty on their wings, and melody in their throats. But could you ensure the continuance of this agreeable entertainment? No, truly: at the least disturbing noise, at the least terrifying appearance, they start from their seats; they mount the skies; and are gone in an instant, gone for ever. Would you chuse to have a happiness, which bears date with their arrival, and expires at their departure? If you could not be content with a portion, that is settled only for such a fortuitous term, not of years, but of moments, O! take up with nothing earthly; set your affections on things above; there alone is, “no variableness or shadow of turning.”

JOB is not a more illustrious pattern of patience, than an eminent exemplification of this remark. —View him in his private estate, he heaps up silver as the dust; he washes his steps in butter; and

and the rock pours him out rivers of oil.—View him in his public character, princes revere his dignity; the aged listen to his wisdom; every eye beholds him with delight; every tongue loads him with blessings.—View him in his domestic circumstances, on one hand, he is defended by a troop of sons; on the other, adorned with a train of daughters; and, on all sides, surrounded by “a very great household.”—Never was human felicity so consummate; never was disastrous revolution so sudden. The lightning, which consumed his cattle, was not more terrible, and scarce more instantaneous. The joyful parent is bereft of his offspring, and his “children are buried in death.” The man of affluence is stript of his abundance; and he that was cloathed in scarlet, embraces the dunghil. The venerable Patriarch is the derision of scoundrels; and the late darling of an indulgent Providence is become “a brother to dragons, a companion of owls.”—Nor need we go back to former ages, for proofs of this afflicting truth. In our times; in all times; the wheel continues the same incessant whirl: and frequently those, who are triumphing, to-day, in the highest elevations of joy; to-morrow, are bemoaning the instability of mortal affairs, in the very depths of misery*—Amidst so much

* I believe, I may venture to apply, what the Termanite says of the affairs of the wicked, to all sublunary things; as a true description of their very great instability. Job, xxii. 16. נֶרַךְ יוֹעַק יִסּוּרָם rendered by Schultens *Flumen fusum fundamentum eorum*. Their foundation (or what they reckon their most solid and stable possession) is a flood poured out.—Which is one of the boldest images, and most poetical beauties, I ever met with in any language, sacred or profane. In order to have a tolerable conception of the image, and a taste of its beauty; you must suppose a torrent of waters rushing

much fluctuation and uncertainty; how wretched is the condition, which has no anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast? May thy loving kindness, O GOD, be our present treasure; and thy future glory, our reversionary inheritance! Then shall our happiness not be like the full-orbed moon, which is "a light that decreaseth in its perfection;" but like the sun, when he goeth forth in his strength, and knoweth no other change, but that of shining more and more unto the perfect day.

METHINKS, in this ever-varying sphere, I see a representation, not only of our temporal advantages, but also of our spiritual accomplishments. Such, I am sure, is what the kind partiality of a friend would call my righteousness: and such, I am apt to suspect* is the righteousness of every man living.

rushing in broken cataracts, and with impetuous rapidity, from a steep and craggy mountain. Then, imagine to yourself an edifice, built upon the surge of this rolling precipice: that has no other basis than one of those whirling waves, which constitute such a headlong stream — Was there ever such a representation of transitory prosperity, tending, with inconceivable swiftness, unto rain? Yet such is every form of human felicity, that is not grounded upon JESUS, and a participation of his merits, who is the rock of ages; on JESUS, and his image-formed in our hearts, which is the hope of glory.

* I would not be understood, as measuring, in this respect, others by myself; but as taking my estimate, from the unerring standard of scripture. And indeed, proceeding on this evidence, supported by this authority, I might have ventured farther than a bare suspicion. For, "there is not a just man upon earth, that doth good, and sinneth not;" says the spirit of inspiration by Solomon (Eccles. vii. 20.)—Nay, such is the purity, and so extensive are the demands, of the divine law,

living. Now, we exercise it, in some few instances ; in some little degrees. Anon, sin revives, and leads our souls into a transient, though unwilling captivity. Now, we are meek ; but soon, a ruffling accident intervenes, and turns our composure into a fretful disquietude. Now we are humble ; soon, we reflect upon some inconsiderable or imaginary superiority over others, and a sudden elatement swells our minds. Now perhaps, we possess a clean Heart, and are warm with holy Love : But, O ! how easily is the purity of our affections sullied ; how soon the fervor of our gratitude cooled ! And is there not something amiss, even in our best moments ? Something to be ashamed of, in all we are ; something to be repented of, in all we do ?

WITH what gladness, therefore, and adoring gratitude, should we “ submit to the righteousness of our incarnate God ? ” and receive, as a divine Gift, what cannot be acquired by human Works † ! — A writer of the first distinction, and nicest discernment, stiles the obedience of our glorious

law, that an apostle makes a still more humbling acknowledgment, “ In many things we offend All.” (Jam. iii. 2.) — And the all-wise Teacher, who most thoroughly knew our frame, directs the most advanced, most established, and most watchful Christians, to pray daily for the forgiveness of their “ daily Trespases ” — To which testimonies, I beg leave to add an elegant passage from the Canticles ; because, it not only expresses the sentiment of this paragraph, but illustrates it by the very same similitude. She (the church) is fair as the moon ; clear as the sun. Fair as the moon, the lesser and changeable light, in her sanctification ; clear as the sun, the greater and invariable luminary, in her justification. The inherent holiness of believers being imperfect, and subject to many inequalities ; while their imputed obedience is every way complete, and constantly like itself. Cant. vi. 10.

† Rom. v. 17. — x. 3.

glorious surety, an everlasting righteousness §. Such as was subject to no interruption, nor obscured by the least blemish ; but proceeded always in the same uniform tenor, of the most spotless perfection. —

This righteousness, in another sense, answers the prophet's noble description : as its beneficial and sovereign efficacy knows no end ; but lasts through all our life ; lasts in the trying hour of death ; lasts at the decisive day of judgment ; lasts through every generation ; and will last to all eternity.

SOMETIMES, I have seen that resplendent globe stript of her radiance ; or, according to the emphatical language of scripture, “ turned into blood.” The earth, interposing with its opaque body, intercepted the solar rays, and cast its own gloomy shadow on the moon. The malignant influence gained upon her sickening orb ; extinguished, more and more, the remainders of light ; till at length, like one in a deep swoon, no comeliness was left in her countenance ; she was totally overspread with darkness—At this juncture, what a multitude of eyes were gazing upon the rueful spectacle ! Even of those eyes, which disregarded the empress of the night ; or beheld her with indifference ; when, robed in glory, and riding in her triumphal chariot, she shed a softer day through the nations. But now, under these circumstances of disgrace, they watch her motions with the most prying attention ; in every place, her misfortune is the object of general observation ; and the prevailing topic of discourse, in every company.

Is it not thus, with regard to persons of eminence, in their respective spheres ! kings at the head of their subjects ; nobles, surrounded with their dependents ; and (after names of so much Grandeur,

deur, may I be allowed to add ?) ministers, in their parishes†; are each in a conspicuous station. Their behaviour, in its minutest step, especially in any miscarriage, will be narrowly surveyed, and critically scanned. Can there be a louder all, to ponder the paths of their feet, and to be particularly jealous over all their ways?—Those, that move in inferior life, may grossly offend; and little alarm be given; perhaps, no notice taken. But it is not to be expected, that the least slip in their conduct, the least flaw in their character, will pass undiscovered. Malice, with her eagle eyes, will be sure to discern them; while censure, with her shrill trumpet, will be as far from concealing them; as calumny, with her treacherous whispers, from extenuating them. A planet may sink below the horizon; or a star, for several months, withdraw its shining; and scarce one in ten thousand perceive the loss. But, if the moon suffers a transient eclipse, almost half the world are spectators of dishonour.

VERY different was the case, when, at this late hour, I have taken a solitary walk on the western cliffs. At the foot of the steep mountain, the sea, all clear and smooth, spread itself into an immense plain, and held a watry mirror to the skies. Infinite heights above, the firmament stretched its azure expanse; bespangled with unnumbered stars, and adorned with the moon, “walking in brightness ‡.” She seemed to contemplate herself, with a peculiar pleasure; while the transparent surface, both received, and returned, her silver image. Here, instead of being covered with sack-cloth, she shone with double lustre; or rather, with a lustre mul-

† Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Matth. v. 14.

‡ Job xxxi. 26.

multiplied, in proportion to the number of beholders, and their various situations.

SUCH, methinks, is the effect of an exemplary behaviour, in persons of exalted rank. Their course, as it is nobly distinguished, so it will be happily influential. Others will catch the diffusive ray; and be ambitious to resemble a pattern, so attracting; so commanding. Their amiable qualities will not terminate in themselves: but we shall see them reflected from their families; their acquaintance; their retainers. Just as we may now behold another moon; trembling in the stream; glittering in the canal; and displaying its lovely impress, on every collection of waters.

THE moon, philosophy says, is a sort of sovereign over the great deep. Her orb, like a royal sceptre, sways the ocean, and actuates the fluid realms. It swells the tides, and perpetuates the reciprocal returns of ebb and flow. By which means, the liquid element purges off its filth; and is preserved, from being putrified itself, and from poisoning the world. Is the moon thus operative on the vast abyss? And shall not the faith of eternal and infinite delights to come, be equally efficacious on this soul of mine?—Far above her argent fields, are treasures of happiness, unseen by mortal eye; by mortal ear unheard; and unconceived by any human imagination. In that desirable world, the most distinguished honours also are conferred; in comparison with which, the thrones and diadems of earthly monarchs are empty pageants, and childish toys. Yonder arch of sapphire, with all its spangles of gold, is but the floor of those divine abodes. What then are the apartments? what is the palace? How bright with glories; how rich with bliss?

O! YE mansions of blessedness; ye beauties of my father's kingdom; that far outshine these lamps

lamps of the visible heaven; transmit your sweet and winning invitations to my heart. Attract, and refine, all my affections. With-hold them from stagnating, on the sordid shores of flesh; never suffer them to settle upon the lees of sense; but impress them with emotions of restless desire, after sublime and celestial joys.—Joys, that will proceed on in one everlasting flow, when seas shall cease to roll:—Joys, that will charm every faculty with unimaginable pleasure; when the moon, with her waxing splendours, shall cheer our sight no more.

ENOUGH for the present evening. My thoughts have been sufficiently exercised, and my steps begin to be attended with weariness. Let me obey the admonition of nature; and give respite to my meditations, slumber to my eyes.—But stay.—Shall I retire to the bed of sleep, with as little ceremony, and with as much inattention, as the brutes to their sordid lair? Are no acknowledgments due to that Divine Being, who has been the support of my life, and the length of my days? Have I no farther need of his protecting care; no more occasion for the blessings of his goodness?—Lepidus, perhaps, may laugh at the bended knee; and have a thousand darts of raillery, ready to be discharged on the practice of devotion. The wits, I know, are unmercifully severe on, what they call, the drudgery of prayer, and the fantastic rant of praise. These they leave to the illiterate labourer, and mean mechanic, or treat them, with a contemptuous sneer, as the parson's ignoble trade.

Is it then an instance of superstitious blindness, to distinguish, or of whimsical zeal, to celebrate, the most super-eminent merit? Is it an ungrateful business; or does it argue a growling disposition; to magnify goodness, transcendently, rich and diffusive?

five? is it only for the inferior herd, to admire the most consummate excellence; only for pusillanimous creatures, to maintain an affiance on almighty Power?—What can be so truly becoming a dependent state, as to pay our adoring homage, to the fountain of perfection; and profess our devoted allegiance, to the supreme Governor of the Universe? Can any thing more significantly bespeak an ingenuous temper; or administer a more real satisfaction to its finest feelings; than the exercises of penitential piety? by which we give vent to an honest anguish; or melt into filial sorrow; for our insensibility to the best of friends, for our disobedience to the best of parents?—In a word; can there be a more sublime pleasure, than to dwell, in fixed contemplation, on the beauties of the eternal mind; the amiable author of all that is fair, grand, and harmonious; the beneficent giver of all that is convenient, comfortable, and useful? Can there be a more advantageous employ, than to present our requests to the father of mercies; opening our minds to the irradiations of his wisdom, and all the faculties of our souls to the communications of his grace?—It is strange, unaccountably strange, that the notion of dignity in sentiment, and the pursuit of refined enjoyment, should ever be disunited from Devotion. That persons, who make pretensions to an improved taste, an exalted genius, should neglect this most ennobling intercourse, with the wisest and best of Beings; the inexhaustible spring of honour and joy.

SHALL I be deterred, from approaching this source of the purest delight? Deterred, from pursuing this highest improvement of my nature? Deterred from all, by a formidable banter; or confuted, by one irrefragable smile?—No: let the moon, in her resplendent sphere; and yonder pole

with

with all its starry train, witness, if I be silent even or morn. If I refrain to kindle in my heart, and breathe from my lips, the reasonable incense of praise. Praise to that great and glorious God, who formed the earth, and built the skies; who poured from his hand the watry world, and breathed the all-surrounding air abroad.—“Thou also madest the night, maker omnipotent! and thou, the day! which I, though less than the least of all thy mercies, have passed in safety, tranquillity, and comfort.—When I was lost in the extravagance of dreams, or lay immersed in the insensibility of sleep; thy hand recovered me from the temporary lethargy, and strung my limbs with recruiting vigour: thy hand set a new, a delicately fine edge, on all my blunted senses: and awakened my thoughts, when benumbed, into alacrity; reduced them, when disconcerted, into order: refitting me, at once to discharge the duties of my station; to relish the innocent entertainments of an animal, and to enjoy the sublime gratifications of a rational capacity.—When darkness covered the face of the creation, at thy command, the sun, arose, and darted its beams; painted the flowers and distinguished every object; gave light to my feet, gave direction to my hands, and gave nature, with all her beautiful scenes, to my eye.—To Thee, O Thou God of my life, I owe the continuance of my being, and the vivacity of my constitution. By thy sacred order, without any consciousness of mine, the wheels of nature move within me, and the vital fountain plays. Impelled by thy power, the crimson current flows through innumerable channels; and never once misses its way; never once is interrupted in its course; when a small obstruction might be disease; or the bursting of a single artery, death. Over-ruled

ruled by thy exquisite skill, it transforms itself, by the nicest operations of an inexplicable kind of chemistry, into a variety of the finest secretions: which glide into the muscles, and swell them for action; or pour themselves into the fluids, and repair their incessant delays: which cause chearfulness to sparkle in the eye, and health to bloom in the cheek.

“DISASTROUS accidents, injurious to the peace of mind, or fatal to the welfare of my body, beset my paths, in formidable ambush. But thy faithfulness, and truth, like an impenetrable shield, covered my head, and guarded me all around. Under this divine protection, I walked secure, amidst legions of apparent perils; and passed unhurt, through an unknown multiplicity of unseen evils. Not one of my bones was broken; not a single shaft grazed upon my ease; even when the eye, that watched over me, saw, in its wide survey, thousands falling beside me, in irrecoverable ruin; and ten thousands deeply wounded by the arrows, that flew on my right-hand—If sickness has, at any time, visited my chamber, or pain harrowed my flesh; it was a wholesome discipline, and a gracious severity. The chastisement proved a sovereign medicine, to cure me of an immoderate fondness, for this imperfect troublesome state; and to quicken my desires, after the unimbittered enjoyments of eternity.—Has not thy munificence, unwearied and unbounded, spread my table; and furnished it, with the finest wheat; replenished it, with marrow and fatness? While temperance sweetened the bowl; appetite seasoned the dish: content and gratitude crowned the repast.—Has not thy kindness, O God of the families of Israel, preserved my affection-

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"nate Relations; who study, by their tender Offices, to soften every care, and heighten every joy; And given me valuable Friends, whose presence is a cordial, to cheer me in a dejected hour; and whose conversation mingles improvement with delight?

"WHEN Sin lay lurking, amidst flowery scenes of pleasure; enlightened by thy Wisdom, I discerned the latent mischief; made resolute by thy grace, I shunned the luscious bane. If, through the impulse of sensuality, or the violence of passion, I have been hurried into the snare, and stung by the serpent; thy faithful admonitions have recalled the foolish wanderer! While the Blood of thy Son has healed his deadly wounds. Some, perhaps, have been cut off in the midst of their iniquities; and, to their inexpressible astonishment, transmitted from their Thrillings of polluted joy, to the agonies of eternal despair: whereas, I have been distinguished by long-suffering mercy; and, instead of lifting up my eyes, in torments to behold a Heaven irrecoverably lost; I may lift them up under the pleasing views of being admitted, ere-long, into those Abodes of unutterable felicity.—In the mean time, thou hast vouchsafed me the Revelation of thy will; the influences of thy spirit; and abundance of the most effectual aids, for advancing in knowledge, and growing in godliness; for becoming more conformable to thy image, and more meet for thy presence; for tasting the sacred pleasures of religion, and securing the unsearchable riches of Heaven.

"How various is thy Beneficence, O Thou Lover of souls! It has unsealed a thousand sources of good; opened a thousand avenues of delight; and heaped blessings upon me, with a ceaseless liberality. If I should attempt to declare them;
N " they

“ they would be more than the Stars, which glitter in this unclouded sky; more than the dewy gems, which will adorn the Face of the morning.

“ AND shall I forget the GOD of my salvation, the author of all my mercies? Rather let my pulse forget to beat!—Shall I render him no expressions of thankfulness? Then might all nature reproach my ingratitude.—Shall I rest satisfied with the bare acknowledgment of my lips. No: let my life be vocal, and speak his praise, in that only genuine, that most emphatical language—the language of devout obedience. Let the bill be drawn upon my very heart; let all my affections acknowledge the draught; and let the whole tenor of my actions, in time, and through Eternity, be continually paying the debt—the mighty debt of duty, veneration, and love.

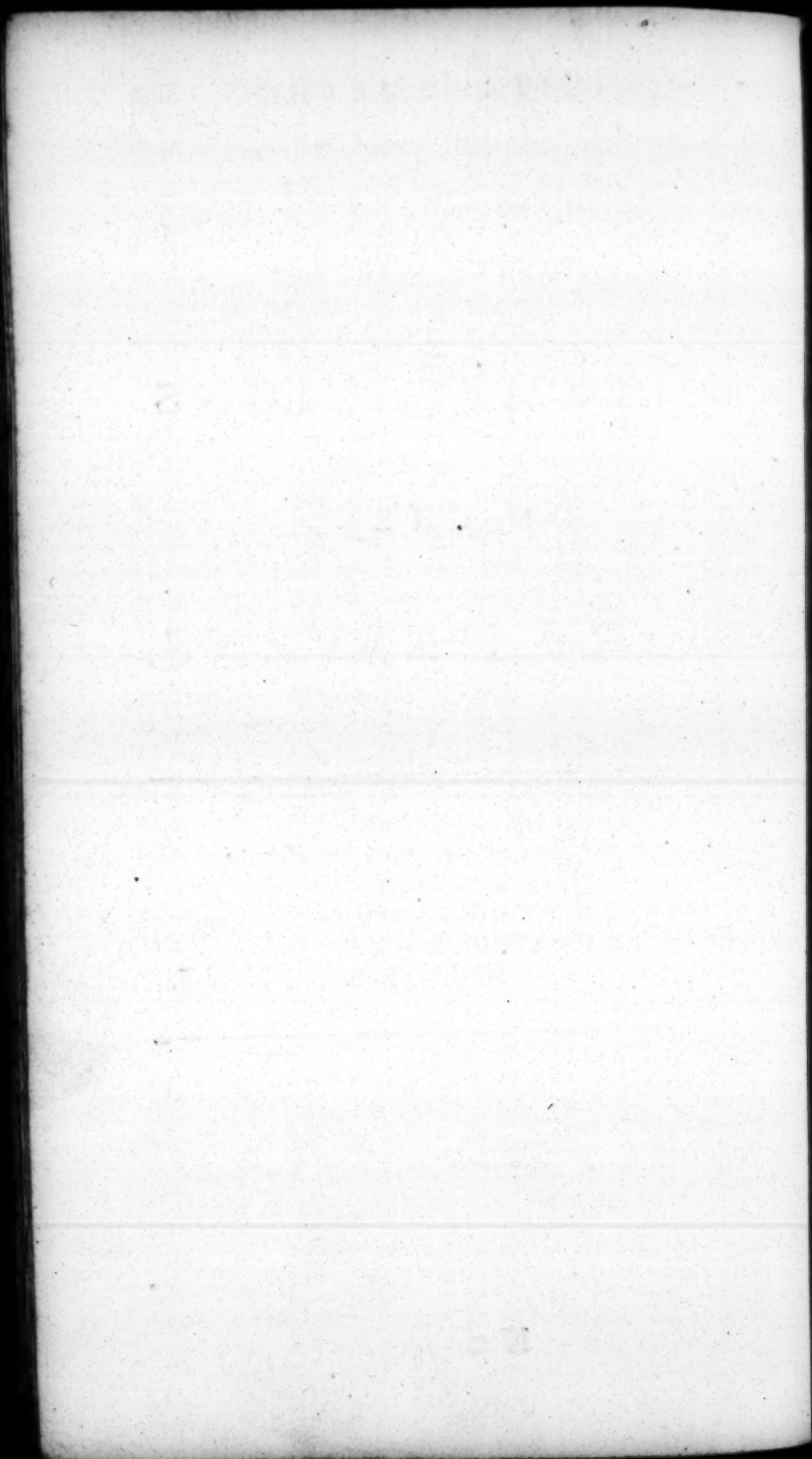
“ AND can I, O Thou Guide of my goings, and Guardian of all my interests—can I distrust such signal, such experienced Goodness? Thou hast been my helper thro’ all the busy scenes of Day: therefore under the Shadow of thy Wings will I repose myself, during the Darkness, the danger, and death-like inactivity of the Night. Whatever defilement I have contracted, wash it thoroughly away, in redeeming Blood; and let neither the sinful Stain, nor the sinful Inclination, accompany me to my Couch!—Then, shall I lay me down in peace, and take my rest; cheerfully referring it to thy all-wise Determination, whether I shall open my Eyes in this World, or awake in the unknown Regions of another.”

THE END.



CONTEMPLATIONS
ON THE
STARRY HEAVENS.

*There dwells a noble Pathos in the Skies,
Which warms our Passions, proselytes our Heart :
How eloquently shines the glowing Pole !
With what Authority it gives its Charge,
Remonstrating great Truths in Stile sublime !*
Night-Thoughts, No. IX.



CONTEMPLATIONS

ON THE

STARRY HEAVENS.

THIS Evening, I exchange the nice Retreats of art, for the noble Theatre of Nature. Instead of measuring my steps, under the covert of an arbour; let me range along the Summit of this gently-rising Hill. — There is no need of the leafy Shade, since the sun has quitted the horizon, and withdrawn his scorching beams. But see, how advantages and inconveniencies are usually linked, and chequer our affairs below! If the annoying heat ceases, the Landscape, and its pleasing scenes are also removed. — The majestic Castle, and the lowly cottage are vanished together. I have lost the aspiring mountain, and its russet brow; I look round, but to no purpose, for the humble vale, and its flowery lap. The plains whitened with Flocks, and the Heath, yellow with furze, disappear. The advancing Night has wrapt in Darkness the long-extended Forest; and drawn her Mantle, over the windings of the silver Stream: I no longer behold the luxuriant Fertility in the Fields; that wild magnificence of prospect, and endless variety of Images; which have so often touched me with delight, and struck me with Awe, from this commanding Eminence.

THE Loss, however, is scarcely to be regretted; since it is amply compensated by the opening Beauties of the Sky. Here, I enjoy a free view of the

whole hemisphere; without any obstacle from below, to confine the exploring Eye; or any Cloud from above, to overcast the spacious concave. 'Tis true, the lively Vermilion, which so lately streaked the chambers of the West, is all faded: But the Planets, one after another, light up their Lamps; the Stars advance in their glittering train; a thousand and a thousand luminaries shine forth in successive splendors; and the whole Firmament is kindling into the most beautiful glow. The Blueness of the Æther, heightened by the season of the Year, and still more enlivened by the Absence of the Moon, gives those Gems of Heaven the strongest Lustre.

ONE Pleasure more the invading gloom has not been able to snatch, from my sense. The Night rather improves, than destroys, the fragrance which exhales from the blooming Beans. With these, the sides of this sloping Declivity are lined; and with these, the balmy Zephyrs perfume their wings. Does Arabia, from all her spicy groves, breathe a more liberal, or a more charming gale of Sweets? And, what is a peculiar recommendation of the rural Entertainments, presented in our happy Land, they are alloyed by no apprehensions of danger. No poisonous Serpent lurks under the Blossom; nor any ravenous Beast lies ready to start from the thicket.—But, I wander from a far more exalted subject. My thoughts, like my affections, are too easily diverted from the Heavens, and detained by inferior objects. Away, my attention, from these little blandishments of the Earth; since all the glories of the Sky invite thy Regard.

WE have taken a turn amongst the Tombs, and viewed the solemn memorials of the Dead; in order to learn the vanity of mortal things, and to break their soft Enchantment.—We have surveyed the ornaments of the Garden; not that the Heart
might

might be planted in the parterre, or take root among the flowery race: but that these delicacies of a day might teach us to aspire after a better paradise; where beauty never fades, and delight is ever in the bloom.—A third time we lighted the candle of meditation; and sought for wisdom, not in the crowded city, or wrangling schools, but in the silent and lonely walks of ancient night*.—Let us once more indulge the contemplative vein, and raise our speculations to those sublimer works of the great Creator; which the regions of the sky contain, and this dusky hour unveils†.

If we have discerned the touches of his pencil, glowing in the colours of spring; if we have seen a sample of his beneficence, exhibited in the stores of nature; and a ray of his brightness, beaming in the blaze of day; O! what an infinitely richer field for the display of his perfection are the heavens! the heavens, in the most emphatical manner, declare the glory of GOD. The Heavens are nobly eloquent of the deity, and the most magnificent Heralds of their maker's praise. They speak to the whole universe; for there is neither speech so barbarous, but their language is understood; nor nation so distant, but their voices are heard among them‡.—Let me then, while multitudes are buried in sleep, listen to their silent lectures. Perhaps, I may receive such impressive manifestations of "the eternal power and god-head," as may shed religion on my soul, while I walk the solitary shades; and may be a tutelary friend to

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* Alluding to the several subjects of the three preceding essays.

† Night opes the noblest scenes, and sheds an awe,
Which gives those venerable scenes full weight,
And deep reception in th' entender'd heart.

Night-Thoughts, No. IX.

‡ Psal. xix. 3.

my virtue, when the call of business, and the return of light, expose me again to the inroads of temptation.

THE Israelites, instigated by phrensy, rather than devotion, worshipped the Host of Heaven. And the pretenders to judicial astrology talk of, I know not what, mysterious efficacy; in the different aspect of the stars, or the various conjunction and opposition of the planets.—Let those, who are unacquainted with the sure word of revelation, give ear to these sons of delusion, and dealers in deceit: for my part, it is matter of indifference to me, whether the constellations shone with smiles, or loured in frowns, on the hour of my nativity. Let CHRIST be my guard; and, secure in such a protection, I would laugh at their impotent menaces. Let CHRIST be my guide; and I shall scorn to ask, as well as despair of receiving, any predictive information from such lifeless masses.—What! shall “the living seek to the dead*?” Can these bodies advertise me of future events, which are unconscious of their own existence? shall I have recourse to unintelligent, stupid matter, when I may apply to that all-wise Being; who, with one comprehensive glance, distinctly views whatever is lodged in the bosom of immensity, or forming in the womb of futurity?—Never will I search for any intimations of my fate; but often trace my Creator’s footsteps†, in yonder starry plains.

* Isai. viii. 19.

† “It is most becoming (says a great Author) such imperfect creatures as we are, to contemplate the works of GOD, with this design, that we may discern the manifestations of wisdom in them; and thereby excite in ourselves those devout affections, and that superlative respect, which is the very essence of praise, as it is a reasonable and moral service.”—“Abernethy on the Attributes.”—And, indeed, if we are sincerely disposed to employ ourselves in this excellent, this compre-

hensive

plains. In the former case, they would be teachers of lyes; in the latter, they are oracles of truth. In this therefore, this sense only, I profess myself the pupil of the stars.

THE vulgar are apprehensive of nothing more, than a multitude of bright Spangles, dropt over the ætherial blue. They have no higher notion of these fine appearances, than that they are so many golden Studs, with which the Empyrean Arch is decorated. —But studious minds, that carry a more accurate and strict inquiry among the celestial bodies, bring back advices of a most astonishing import. Let me just recollect the most material of those stupendous discoveries; in order to furnish out proper subjects for our contemplation. And let the unlearned remember, That the scene I am going to display, is the workmanship of that incomprehensible GOD, who is “perfect in knowledge, and mighty in power:” whose name, whose nature, and all whose operations, are “great and marvellous:” who summons into being, with equal ease, a single grain, or ten thousand worlds.—To this, if we continually advert, the

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assertions,

hensive duty in praising the infinite Creator; the means and the motives are both at hand. His works, in a wonderful and instructive variety, present themselves; with pregnant manifestations, of the most transcendent excellencies of their Maker. They pour their evidence from all quarters, and into all the avenues of the mind. They invite us, especially in the magnificent system of the universe, to contemplate—Counsel, consummately wise; and Execution, inimitably perfect:—Power, to which nothing is impossible; and Goodness, which extended to all, which endureth for ever.—To give, not a full display, but only such slight strictures, of these glorious truths, is the principal scope of the following remarks.

assertions, though they will certainly excite our admiration, need not transcend our belief.

THE earth, is, in fact, a round body ; however it may seem, in some parts, to be sunk into vales, and raised into hills* ; in other parts, to be spread into a spacious plain, extending to the confines of the Heavens, or terminated by the waters of the ocean. — We may fancy, that it has deep foundations, and rests upon some prodigiously solid basis : but it is pendent, in the wide transpicious æther ; without any visible cause, to uphold it from above, or support it from beneath.—It may seem to be sedentary in its attitude, and motionless in its situation : but it is continually sailing†, thro' the depths of the sky ; and, in the space of twelve months, finishes the mighty voyage. Which periodical rotation produces the seasons, and completes the year.—As it proceeds in the annual circuit, it spins upon its own centre ; and turns its

* A learned writer, I think, Dr. Derham, has somewhere an observation to this purpose.—That the loftiest summits of hills, and the most enormous ridges of mountains, are no real objection to the globular form of the earth. Because, however, they may render it, to our limited sight, vastly uneven and protuberant ; yet they bear no more proportion to the intire surface of the terraqueous ball, than a particle of dust, casually dropt on the Mathematician's globe, bears to its whole circumference. Consequently, the rotund figure is no more destroyed in the one case, than in the other.—On the same principle, I have not thought it necessary, to take any notice of the comparatively small difference, between the Polar and Equatorial diameter of the earth.

† With what amazing speed, this vessel (if I may carry on the allusion) filled with a multitude of nations, and freighted with all their possessions, makes her way thro' the ætherial space ; see page 113, in note.

its sides, alternately, to the fountain of light. By which means, the day dawns in one hemisphere; while the night succeeds in the other. Without this expedient, one part of its region would, during half the great revolution, be scorched with excessive heat, or languish under an unintermitted glare: while the other, exposed to the contrary extremes, would be frozen to ice, and buried under a long oppression of dismal and destructive darkness.

I CANNOT forbear taking notice; that, in this compound motion of the earth, the one in no wise interferes with the other, but both are perfectly compatible.—Is it not thus, with the precepts of religion, and the needful affairs of the present life; not excepting even the innocent gratifications of our appetites?—Some, I believe, are apt to imagine, that they must renounce society, if they devote themselves to CHRIST; and abandon all the satisfaction of this world, if they once become zealous candidates for the felicity of another.—But this is a very mistaken notion, or else a very injurious representation, of the doctrine which is according to godliness. It was never intended to drive men into deserts; but to lead them, through the peaceful and pleasant paths of wisdom, into the blissful regions of life eternal. It was never intended to strike off the wheels of business, or cut in sunder the sinews of industry; but rather, to make men industrious from a principle of conscience, not from the instigations of avarice; that so, they may promote their immortal happiness, even while they provide for their temporal maintenance. It has no design to extirpate our passions, but only to restrain their irregularities; neither would it damp the delights of sense, but prevent them from evaporating into vanity, and subsiding into gall.—A person may be cheerful among his friends, and yet joyful in GOD. He may taste the

the sweets of his earthly estate; and, at the same time cherish his hopes of a nobler inheritance in heaven. The trader may prosecute the demand of commerce, without neglecting to negotiate the affairs of his salvation. The warrior may wear his sword: may draw, in a just cause, that murderous weapon; and yet be a good soldier of JESUS CHRIST, and obtain the crown that fadeth not away. The parent may lay up a competent portion for his children, and not forfeit his title to the treasures, either of grace or glory.—So far is christianity, from obstructing any valuable interest, or withholding any real pleasure; that it evidently advances the one, and improves the other. Just as the diurnal and annual motions are so far from clashing, that they perfectly accord; and, instead of being destructive of each, other, by mutually blending their effects, they give proportion and harmony to time, fertility and innumerable benefits to nature.

To us that dwell on its surface, the earth is by far the most extensive orb; that our eyes can, any where, behold. It is also cloathed with verdure; distinguished by trees; and adorned with a variety of beautiful decorations. Whereas, to a spectator placed on one of the planets, it wears an uniform aspect; looks all luminous, and no larger than a spot. To beings, who dwell at still greater distances, it intirely disappears.—That which we call, alternately, the morning, or the evening-star; as, in one part of her orbit, she rides foremost in the proceßion of night; in the other, ushers in and anticipates the dawn; is a planetary world. Which with the four others, that so wonderfully vary their mystic dance, are in themselves dark bodies, and shine only by reflection: have fields, and seas, and skies of their own: are furnished with all accommodations

modations for animal subsistence ; and are supposed to be the abodes of intellectual life. All which, together with this our earthly habitation, are dependent on that grand dispenser of divine munificence, the sun ; receive their light from the distribution of his rays, and derive their comforts from his benign agency.

THE sun, that seems to perform its daily stages through the sky, is, in this respect *, fixed and unmoveable. 'Tis the great axle of heaven, about which the globe we inhabit, and other more spacious orbs, wheel their stated courses.—The sun, though seemingly smaller than the dial it illuminates, is abundantly larger † than this whole earth ; on which so many lofty mountains rise, and such vast oceans roll. A line, extending from side to side, through the centre of that resplendent orb, would measure more than eight hundred thousand miles : a girdle, formed to go round its circumference, would require a length of millions : and, were its solid contents to be computed, the account would even confound our understanding, and be almost beyond the power of language to express. — Are we startled at these reports of philosophy ?

* I say, in this respect ; that I may not seem to forget, or exclude, the revolution of the sun round its own axis.

† A hundred thousand times, according to the lowest reckoning. Sir Isaac Newton computes the sun to be 900,000 times bigger than the earth. *Relig. Philos.* p. 749.

§ Dr. Derham, after having calculated the dimension of the planets, adds, " Amazing as these masses are, they are all far outdone by that stupendous globe of light, the sun ; which, as it is the fountain of light, and heat, to all the planets about it, so doth it far surpass

lofophy? Are we ready to cry out, in a tranfport of furprife; how mighty is the Being, who kindled fuch a prodigious fire, and keeps alive, from age to age, fuch an enormous mafs of flame?—Let us attend our philofophic guides, and we fhall be brought acquainted with fpeculations, incomparably more enlarged and amazing.

THIS fun, with all its attendant planets, is but a very little part of the grand machine of the univerfe. Every ftar, though in appearance no bigger than a diamond, that glitters upon a lady's ring; is really a vaft globe, like the fun in fize, and in glory; no lefs fpaceous, no lefs luminous, than the radiant fource of our day. So that every ftar is, not barely a world, but the centre of a magnificent fyftem; has a retinue of worlds, irradiated by its beams, and revolving round its attractive influence. All which are loft, to our fight, in unmeafurable wilds of æther.—That the ftars appear like fo many diminutive, and fcarce diftinguifhable points, is owing to their immense, and inconceivable diftance. Immense and inconceivable indeed it is; fince a ball, fhut from the loaded cannon, and flying with unabated rapidity, muft travel at this impetuous rate, almoft feven hundred thoufand years*, before it could reach the neareft of thofe twinkling luminaries.

CAN any thing be more wonderful, than thefe obfervations? Yes: There are truths, far more ftupendous; there are fcenes, far more unbounded. As there is no end of the Almighty Maker's greatness; fo no imagination can fet limits to his creating

furpafs them all in its bulk, its apparent diameter being computed at 822,148 Englifh miles, its ambit at 2,582,873 miles, and its folid contents at 290,971,000,000,000,000." *Aftro. Theol. Book I. Chap. II.*

* See Religious Philofopher, p. 819.—Where the exact computation is 691,600 years.

ing hand.— Could you soar beyond the moon, and pass through all the planetary choir : could you wing your way to the highest apparent star, and take your stand on one of those loftiest pinnacles of heaven : you would, there, see other skies expanded ; another sun, distributing his inexhaustible beams by day ; other stars, that gild the horrors of the alternate night : and other †, perhaps nobler systems, established ; established, in unknown profusion, thro' the boundless dimensions of space.— Nor does the dominion of the great Sovereign terminate there. Even at the end of this vast tour, you would find yourself advanced no farther, than the suburbs of creation ; arrived only at the frontiers, of the great JEHOVAH's kingdom *.

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† See Astro-Theology, Book II. Chap. II.—Where the Author having assigned various reasons to support this theory of our modern astronomers, adds—" Besides (the forementioned) strong probabilities, we have this farther recommendation of such an account of the universe, that it is far more magnificent, and worthy of the infinite Creator, than any other of the narrower schemes."

* Job, after a most sublime dissertation, on the mighty works of God ; as they are scattered through universal nature, from the heights of heaven, to the very depths of hell ; closes the magnificent account with this noble acknowledgment ; ' Lo ! these are parts of his ways.' Or, as the original word more literally signifies ; and may, I think, be more elegantly rendered ; These are only the skirts, the very outermost borders, of his works ; no more than a small preface to the immense volume of the creation.— From the Hebrew קצות — *Extremities* — I cannot forbear thinking, on the extreme and very attenuated fibres of the root, when compared with the whole substance of the trunk ; or on the exquisitely small size of the capillary vessels, when compared with the whole structure of the body. Job, xxvi. 14.

ARE we struck with amazement, at this little sketch of a very little part of his works? How then must we be lost in wonder, at the consideration of the Creator himself! Who is so high, that he looks down on the highest of these dazzling spheres, and sees even the summit of creation in a vale: so great, that this prodigious extent of space, is but a point in his presence; and all this confluence of worlds, as the lightest atom, that fluctuates in air, and disports in the meridian ray*.

O! THOU sublime and incomprehensibly glorious GOD, how am I overwhelmed with awe, and sunk into the lowest prostration of mind; when I consider thy excellent greatness, together with my own littleness and insignificancy!——Is there not most abundant reason, to be even confounded

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* This puts me in mind of a very fine remark on a scriptural beauty; and a solid correction of the common translation; made by that learned, sagacious, and devout expositor, Vitringa—Isa. xl. 15. We find it written of the Supreme Being, That ‘he taketh up the isles, as a very little thing.’ Which our critic observes, is neither answerable to the import of the original, nor consonant to the structure of the discourse. The prophet had no intention to inform mankind, what the Almighty could do, with regard to the islands, if he pleased to exert his power: But his design was to shew, how insignificant, or rather what mere nothings they are, in his esteem, and before his Majesty.—The islands, says he, though so spacious, as to afford room for the erection of kingdoms, and the abode of nations; though so strong, as to withstand, for many thousands of years, the raging and reiterated assaults of the whole watery world; are yet, before the adored Jehovah, small as the minutest grain, which the eye can scarce discern; light as the feathered mote, which the least breath hurries away like a tempest.—**יִם בְּדֶק יָטוּל** Insulæ sunt et leve quod avolat. “The deep-rooted Islands are as the volatile atom, which by the gentlest undulation of the air is wafted to and fro in perpetual agitation.”

at the remembrance; that, excessively mean as I am, I should ever entertain one conceited apprehension of myself? should feel the least elatement of thought, in the presence of so majestic and adorable a Being? — Were I possessed of all the high perfections, that accomplish and adorn the angels of light; yet, amidst all these noble endowments, I would fall down in the deepest abasement at thy feet. Lost in the infinitely superior blaze, of thy uncreated glories; I would confess myself to be less than nothing, and vanity.—How much more ought I to maintain the most unfeigned humiliation, before thy divine Majesty; who am not only dust and ashes, but a compound of imperfection and depravity!

WHILE beholding this vast expanse, I learn my own extreme meanness; I would also discover the abject littleness, which is in all terrestrial things. — What is the earth, with all her ostentatious scenes, compared with this astonishing furniture of the skies? What, but a dim speck, hardly perceivable in the map of the universe? It is observed, by a very judicious writer §, that if the sun himself, which enlightens this part of the creation, was extinguished; and all the host of planetary worlds, that move about him, were annihilated; they would not be missed, by an eye that can take in the whole compass of nature, any more than a grain of sand upon the sea-shore. The bulk of which they consist, and the space which they occupy, is so exceedingly little in comparison of the whole; that their loss would scarce leave a blank in the immensity of God's works.—If, then, not our globe only, but this whole system, be so very diminutive; what is a kingdom or a country? What are a few Lordships, or the so much admired patrimonies

patrimonies of those, who are stiled wealthy†? When I measure them with my own little pittance, they swell into enormous dimensions. But, when I take the boundless universe for my standard, how scanty is their size, how contemptible their figure! They shrink into proud and pompous nothings‡.

WHEN the keen-eyed eagle soars above all the feathered race, and leaves their very sight below: when she wings her towering way up the steep of heaven; and, steadily gazing on the meridian sun, accounts its beaming splendors all her own: Does she then regard, with any solicitude, the mote that is flying in the air, or the dust which she shook from her feet? And shall this eternal mind of mine, which is capable of contemplating its Creator's glory; which is intended to enjoy the visions of his countenance; shall this eternal mind, endued with such great capacities; and made for such exalted ends, be so ignobly ambitious, as to sigh for the tinsels of state; or so poorly covetous, as to grasp after ample territories on a needle's point?—O! no: While such my considerations, I feel my sentiments expand, and my wishes acquire a turn of sublimity. Such vast surveys assimilate the soul, and make her truly great. My throbbing desires after worldly grandeur die away; and I find myself, if not possessed of power, yet superior to its charms.—Too long, must I own, have my affections been pinioned by vanity, and immured in this earthly clod. But these thoughts break the shackles*. These objects open the door of liberty:

† “Juvat inter sydera vagantem divitum pavimenta ridere, & totam cum auro suo terram.” Seneca.

‡ “Terrellæ grandia inania.” Watts's Hor. Lyr.

* The soul of man was made to walk the skies, Delightful outlet of her prison here!

There, disincumber'd from her chains, the ties

erty: My heart, fired by such noble prospects, weighs anchor from this little nook; and coasts no longer about its contracted shores; doats no longer on its painted shells. The immensity of things is her range; and an infinity of bliss is her aim.

BEHOLD this immense expanse, and admire the condescension of thy God.—In this manner, an inspired and princely astronomer improved his survey of the nocturnal heavens. When I consider thy heavens, even the works of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; I am smitten with wonder at thy glory, and cry out in a transport of gratitude, Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him; or the son of man, that thou visitest him ‡? “How amazing, how charming, is that divine grace, which is pleased to bow down its sacred regards, to so foolish and worthless a creature! Yea, disdains not from the height of infinite exaltation, to extend its kind providential care, to our most minute concerns!—But, that the everlasting sovereign should give his son, to be our incarnate Saviour; what a miracle is this of condescending goodness! Or rather, what are all miracles, what are all mysteries, to this ineffable gift!”

HAD the brightest Archangel been commissioned to come down, with the olive-branch of peace in his hand; and to signify his eternal maker's readiness to be reconciled; on our bended knees, with tears of joy, and a torrent of thankfulness, we ought to have received the transporting news. But when, instead of such an angelic envoy, he sends
His

Of toys terrestrial, she can rove at large;

There freely can respire, dilate, extend,

In full proportion let loose all her powers:

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‡ Psal. viii. 3, 4.

His only begotten son ; his son beyond all thought illustrious, to make us the gracious Overture :—sends him from the “ Habitation of his holiness and Glory,” to put on all the innocent infirmities of mortality, and dwell in a tabernacle of clay :—sends him, not barely to make us a transient visit, but to abide many years in our inferior and miserable world :—sends him, not to exercise dominion over monarchs, but to wear out his life in the ignoble form of a servant ; and, at last, to make his Exit under the infamous character of a malefactor ! Was ever love like this ? did ever grace stoop so low § ?—Should the sun be shorn of all his radiant

§ This reminds me of a very noble piece of sacred Oratory, where, in a fine series of the most beautiful gradations, the apostle displays the admirably condescending kindness of our Saviour—“ He thought it “ no robbery,” it was his indisputable right, to be equal with the infinite, self-existent, immortal God. Yet, in mercy to sinners, He emptied himself of the incommunicable honours, and laid aside the robes, of incomprehensible glory.—When he entered upon his mediatorial state, instead of acting in the grand capacity of universal sovereign, He took upon him the form of a servant. And not the form of those ministering spirits, whose duty is dignity itself ; who are throned, though adoring.—He took not on him the nature of angels, but stooped incomparably lower. Assumed a body of animated dust, and was made in the likeness of men ; those inferior and depraved creatures.— Astonishing condescension ! but not sufficient for the overflowing richness of the Redeemer’s love. For being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself farther still ; occupied the lowest place, where all was low and ignoble. He not only submitted to the yoke of the divine law, but also bore the infirmities, and ministered to the necessities of mortals. He even washed the feet of others, and had not where to lay his own head.—Yea, he carried his meritorious humiliation

diant honours, and degraded into a cloud of the vallies; should all the dignitaries of heaven be deposed from their thrones, and degenerate into insects of a day; great, great would be the abasement. But nothing to thine, most blessed Jesus; nothing to thine, thou prince of peace; when for us men and for our salvation, Thou didst not abhor the coarse accommodations of the manger; Thou didst not decline even the gloomy horrors of the grave.

'Tis well, the sacred oracles have given this doctrine, the most reiterated and incontestable evidence. Otherwise, so prodigious a favour must stagger our belief.—Could He, who launches all these planetary globes thro' the illimitable void; and leads them on, from age to age, in their extensive career; could He resign his hands, to be confined by the girding cord; and his back to be plowed by the bloody scourge?—Could He, who crowns all the stars with inextinguishable brightness; be himself defiled with spitting, and disfigured with the thorny scar? It is the greatest of wonders, and yet the surest of truths.

O! YE mighty orbs, that roll along the spaces of the sky; I wondered, a little while ago, at your vast dimensions, and ample circuits: But now my amazement ceases; or rather, is intirely swallowed up by a much more stupendous subject. Methinks your enormous bulk is shrivelled to an atom; your prodigious revolutions are contracted to a span; while I muse upon the far more elevated heights, and unfathomable depths; the infinitely more extended

to the very deepest degrees of possible abasement. He became obedient unto death—And not to common or natural death, but a death more infamous than the gibbet; more torturous than the rack—even the accursed death of the cross. Phil. ii. 6, 7, 8.

tended lengths, and unlimited breadths, of this love of God in Christ Jesus §.

WHILE I behold this vast expanse, I see a mirror, that represents, in the most awful colours, the greatness of the creator's glory, and the heinousness of human glory.—Ten thousand volumes, wrote on purpose to display the aggravations of my various acts of disobedience, could not so effectually convince me of their inconceivable enormity, as the consideration of that all-glorious person †; who, to make an atonement for them, spilt the last drop of his blood.—I have sinned, may every child of Adam say; and what shall I do unto thee, O thou observer of men ‡? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul: Vain computation! and such as would be rejected by the blessed God, with the utmost abhorrence.—Will all the potentates, that sway the scepter in a thousand kingdoms, devote their sacred and honoured lives, to rescue an obnoxious creature from the stroke of vengeance? Alas; it must cost more, vastly more, to expiate the malignity of sin, and save a guilty wretch from hell.—Will all the principalities of heaven be content to assume my nature, and resign themselves to death for my pardon ||? even this would be too mean a Satisfaction,

§ Eph. iii. 18, 19.

† Quo quisque altius ascendit in agnitione Christi, eo profundius peccati atrocitatem cognoscet.

‡ Job, vii. 20. Not preserver, as it stands in our version, but observer of men. Which phrase, as it expresses the strict and incessant inspection of the divine eyes, as it intimates the absolute impossibility, that any transgression should escape the divine notice; is evidently most proper, both to assign the reason, and heighten the emphasis of the context.

|| Milton sets this thought in a very poetical and striking

Satisfaction, for inexorable justice; too scanty a reparation, of God's injured honour. So flagrant is human guilt, that nothing, but a victim of infinite dignity, could constitute an adequate propitiation.—He who said, "Let there be light, and there was light;" Let there be a firmament, and

striking light—All the sanctities of heaven stand round the throne of the supreme majesty. God foresees and foretells the Fall of Man; the ruin, which will unavoidably ensue on his transgression; and the utter impossibility of his being ever able to extricate himself, from the abyss of misery.

He, with his whole posterity, must die;
Die he, or justice must; unless for him
Some other able, and as willing, pay
The rigid satisfaction, death for death.

After which affecting representation, intended to raise the most tender emotions of pity; the following inquiry is addressed to all the surrounding angels:

Say, heav'nly pow'rs where shall we find such love?
Which of you will be mortal, to redeem
Man's mortal crime? and die, the dead to save?

He ask'd; but all the heav'nly choir stood mute,
And silence was in heaven.——

There is, to me at least, an inimitable spirit and beauty in the last circumstance.—That such an innumerable multitude of generous and compassionate Beings should be struck dumb with surprize and terror, at the very mention of the deadly forfeiture and ransom set! No language is so eloquent as this silence. Words could not possibly have expressed, in so emphatical a manner, the dreadful nature of the task; the absolute inability of any or all creatures to execute it; the super-eminent and matchless love of the eternal son, in undertaking the tremendous work; not only without reluctance, but unsought and unimplored; with readiness, alacrity, and delight. *Paradise Lost*, Book III. line 209. Edit. BENTL.

and immediately the blue curtains floated in the sky; He must take flesh; He must feel the fierce torments of crucifixion; and pour out his soul in agonies, if ever such transgressors are pardoned.

How vast is the debt; which all the wealth of both the Indies cannot discharge! How vitiated that habit of body; which all the drugs produced by nature herself, cannot rectify! But how much more ruined was thy condition, O my soul! how much more heinous were thy crime? since nothing less than the sufferings and death of Messiah, the son of God, and radiant image of his glory, could effect thy recovery, or cancel thy iniquity.—Though, perhaps, thou art not sunk so very deep in pollution, as some of the most abandoned profligates; yet remember the inestimable ransom, paid to redeem thee from everlasting destruction. Remember this; and “never open thy mouth any more §,” either to murmur at the divine chastisements, or to glory in thy own attainments. Remember this; and even “loath thyself † for the multitude of thy provocations,” and thy great baseness.

ONCE more: Let me view this beautiful, this magnificent expanse; and conceive some juster apprehensions, of the unknown richness of my Saviour's atonement.——I am informed by a writer who cannot mistake, that the high-priest of my profession, who was also the sacrifice for my sins, is higher than the heavens ‡; more exalted in dignity, more bright with glory, than all the heavenly mansions, and all their illustrious inhabitants. If my heart was humbled, at the consideration of its excessive guilt; how do all my drooping powers revive, at this delightful thought! The poor criminal,

§ Ezek. xvi. 63.

† Ezek. xxxvi. 31.

‡ Heb. vii. 26.

nal, that seemed to be tottering on the very brink of the infernal pit; is raised by such a belief, even to the portals of paradise. My self-abasement, I trust, will always continue; but my fears, under the influence of such a conviction, are quite gone*. I do not, I cannot, doubt the efficacy of this propitiation. While I see a glimpse of its matchless excellency; and verily believe myself interested in its merits; I know not what it is, to feel any misgiving suspicions; but am, steadfast in faith, and joyful through hope.

BE my iniquities like debts of millions of talents, here is more than full payment for all that mighty sum. Let the enemy of mankind, and accuser of the brethren, load me with invectives before the dreadful tribunal; this one plea, "a divine Redeemer died,"

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* I am sorry to find, that some of my readers were a little disgusted at this expression, "My fears are quite gone," as thinking, it discovered a tincture of arrogance in the writer, and tended to discourage the weak Christian. But I hope a more mature consideration will acquit me, from both these charges.—For, what has the Author said? Only, that at some peculiarly happy moments, when the Holy Ghost bears witness of CHRIST in his heart, and is favoured with a glimpse of the Redeemer's matchless excellency,—that, in these bright intervals of life, his trembling fears, with regard to the decisive sentence of the great tribunal, are turned into pleasing expectations. And what is there in such a declaration offensive to the strictest modesty, or dispiriting to the weakest believer? Instead of striking terror, it points out the way of obtaining a settled tranquillity. Its natural tendency is, to engage the serious mind in a more constant and attentive meditation, on the unknown merits of the divine MEDIATOR. And were we more thoroughly acquainted, more deeply affected, with his unutterable dignity; I am persuaded, our uneasy apprehensions would proportionably vanish; our faith be established, our hopes brightened, and our joys enlarged.

most thoroughly quashes every indictment. For, though there be much turpitude, and manifold transgressions, "there is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus."—Nay, were I chargeable with all the vilest deeds, that have been committed in every age of the world, by every nation of men; even in this most deplorable case, I need not sink into despair. Even such guilt, though grievous beyond all expression, is not to be compared with the abundance of grace and righteousness, which is in the incarnate Divinity.—How great, how transcendently glorious, are the perfections of the adored Jehovah! So great, so superlatively precious, is the expiation of the dying Jesus. 'Tis impossible for the human mind to exalt this atonement*, too highly; 'tis impossible for the humble penitent to confide in it, too steadily. The scriptures, the scriptures of eternal truth, have said it (exult, my soul, in the belief of it,) that the blood on which we rely, is God's own blood†; and therefore all-sufficient to expiate, omnipotent to save.

DAVID,

* This doctrine, though rich with consolation to the ruined sinner; yet, is it not likely to open a door for licentiousness, and embolden transgressors to prosecute their vices?—No: It is the most powerful motive to that genuine repentance, which flows from an ardent love of God; and operates in a hearty detestation of all sin, and an unfeigned desire to abound in the works of obedience. One, who knew the unmeasurable goodness of the Lord, and was no stranger to the sinful perverseness of our nature, says, "there is mercy with thee: therefore shalt thou be feared." Psal. cxxx. 4.—Words, full to my purpose; which at once add the highest authority to this sentiment, and direct our minds to its proper influence, and due improvement.

† Acts xx. 28.

DAVID, that most egregious sinner, but more exemplary saint, seems to have been well acquainted with this comfortable truth. What else can be the import of that very remarkable, but devout declaration, "Thou shalt purge me § with hyssop, and I shall be clean: thou shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow!"—"I have been guilty, I must confess, of the most complicated and shocking crimes: Crimes, inflamed by every aggravating circumstance, with regard to myself, my neighbour, and my God. Myself, who have been blessed above men, and the distinguished favourite of Providence; my neighbour, who, in the most dear and tender interests, has been irreparably injured; my God, who might justly expect the most grateful returns of duty, instead of such enormous violations of his law. Yet, all horrid and execrable as my offence is, it is nothing to the superabundant merit of that great Redeemer, who was promised from the foundations of the world; in whom all my fathers trusted; who is the hope of all the ends of the earth. Though my conscience be more loathsome, with the adulterous impurity, than the dunghil; though the most barbarous of murders has rendered it, even black as the gloom of hell; yet, washed in 'the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness,' || I shall

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§ Psal. li. 7. "Thou shalt purge." I prefer this translation, before the new one. Because, this speaks the language of a more stedfast belief, and give the highest honour to the divine goodness. Were the words intended to bear no more than the common petitionary sense; and not to be expressive of a nobler plerophory of faith; they would rather have been **אֶפְשָׁר** and **בְּרָכָה** Imperatives, not Futures.

|| Zech. viii. 1.

shall be—I say not, pure only, this were a disparagement to the efficacy of the Saviour's death; but I shall be fair as the lily, and white as the snow. Nay, let me not derogate from the glorious object of my confidence; cleansed by this sovereign stream, I shall be fairer than the full-blown lily, whiter than the new-fallen snows."

"POWER," saith the Scripture, "belongeth unto God;"—And, in what majestic lines, is this attribute of Jehovah written, throughout the whole volume of the creation? Especially through those magnificent pages, unfolded in yonder starry regions. Which are therefore stiled by the sweet and sublime singer of Israel, "The firmament of his power." Because the grand exploits of Omnipotence are there displayed, with the utmost pomp; and recorded, in the most legible characters.

Who, that looks upwards to the midnight sky; and, with an eye of reason, beholds its rolling wonders; can forbear inquiring, Of what were those mighty orbs formed?—Amazing to relate! They were produced without materials. They sprung from emptiness itself. The stately fabric of universal Nature emerged out of nothing—What instruments were used by the Supreme Architect, to fashion the parts with such exquisite niceness, and give so beautiful a polish to the surface? With what were the various pieces of the complicated structure, cemented; and how was all connected into one finely-proportioned, and nobly-finished Whole?—A bare fiat accomplished all. LET THEM BE, said God. He added no more; and immediately the marvellous edifice arose; adorned with every beauty; displaying innumerable perfections; and declaring, amidst admiring seraphs, its great

great Creator's praise. "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth¶."—What wonderful force fixed some of those vast globes, on an immovable basis? What irresistible impulse bowled others, through the dark profound? And what coercive energy confined their impetuous courses, within the nicest, strictest bounds?—Nothing but his sovereign will. For all things were at first constituted, and all to this day abide, "according to his ordinance."

WITHOUT any toilsome assiduity; or laborious process; to raise—to touch—to speak such a multitude of enormous bodies into being;—to launch them through the spaces of the sky, as an arrow from the hand of a giant;—to impress on such unwieldy masses, a motion, far outstripping the swiftness of the winged creation §;—and to continue
 O 3 them

¶ If this thought is admitted a second time, and suffered to ennoble the next paragraph; it is partly, because of its unequalled sublimity; partly, because it awakes the most grand idea of creating power; and partly, because the practice of the Psalmist, an authority too great to be controverted, is my precedent.—The beautiful stanza quoted from Psal. xxxiii. 6. is a proof, how thoroughly the Royal Poet entered into the majesty of the Mosaic narration. The repetition of the sentiment, ver. 9. intimates, how peculiarly he was charmed, with that noble manner, of describing the divine operations: While the turn of his own composition shews, how perfectly he possessed the same elevated way of thinking. And this, long before Longinus wrote the celebrated treatise, which has taught the Heathen as well as the Christian-world, to admire the dignity of the Jewish Legislator's style. Vide Longin. de Sublim. Sect. IX.

§ To give one instance of this remark.——The earth, in the diurnal revolution, which it performs on
 its

them in the same rapid whirl, for thousands and thousands of years; — What an astonishing instance of infinite might is this! — Can any thing be impossible to the Lord, the Lord God; the Creator and Controller of all the ends of the earth, all the borders of the universe? Rather, is not all that we count difficult, perfect ease to that glorious Being, who only spake, and the world was made*? Who only gave command, and the stupendous axle was lodged fast, the lofty wheels moved complete? — What a sure defence, O my soul, is this everlasting strength of thy God! Be this thy continual refuge, in the article of danger; this thy never-failing resource, in every time of need.

WHAT cannot this uncontrollable power of the great Jehovah effect for his people? Be their miseries ever so galling, cannot this God relieve them? Be their wants ever so numerous, cannot this God supply them? Be their corruptions within, ever so inveterate, or their temptations without, ever so importunate; cannot this mighty, mighty God subdue the one, and fortify them against the other? — Should trials, with an incessant

its own axis, whirls about at the rate of above a thousand miles an hour. And as the great orbit which it describes annually round the sun, is reckoned at 540 millions of miles, it must travel near a million and a half each day. — What an amazing force must be requisite to protrude so vast a globe: and wheel it on, loaded as it is with huge mountains, and ponderous rocks, at such a prodigious degree of rapidity! it surpasses human conception! — How natural, how pertinent, how almost necessary after such an observation, is the acknowledgment made by holy Job! “I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee.” Chap. xlii. 2.

* Psal. xxxiii. 9.

incessant vehemence, sift thee as wheat; should tribulation, with a weight of woe, almost grind thee to powder; should pleasure, with her bewitching smile, solicit thee to delicious ruin; yet "hold thee fast by God," and lay thy help upon him that is omnipotent*. Thou canst not be involved in

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such

* It is a most charming description, as well as comfortable promise, which we find in Isa. 29, 30, 31.—HE giveth power to the feeble; and to them that have no might at all, He not only imparteth, but increaseth strength; making it to abound, where it did not so much as exist.—Without this aid of JEHOVAH, even the youths, in the very prime of their vigour and activity, shall become languid in their work, and weary in their course. And the young men, to whose resolution and abilities nothing seemed impracticable, shall not only not succeed, but utterly fall, and miscarry in their enterprizes.—Whereas, they that wait upon the LORD, and rely on his grace, shall press on, with a generous ardor, from one degree of religious improvement to another: instead of exhausting, they shall renew their strength; difficulties shall animate, and toil invigorate them; they shall mount up, as with soaring wings above all opposition; they shall be carried through every discouragement, as eagles cleave the yielding air; they shall run, with speed and alacrity, the way of God's commandments, and not be weary; they shall hold on, with constancy and perseverance, in those peaceful paths, and not faint; but arrive at the end of their progress, and win the prize of their high calling.

To this most cheering doctrine, permit me to add its no less beautiful and delightful contrast. Eliphaz, speaking of the enemies of the righteous, says—קִימְנוּ לַאֲדֹנָי— which is rendered by a great critic in sacred learning, "Nihil excisum factio nobis adversaria."—We should reckon, our language acquitted itself tolerably well, if, when depreciating the abilities of an adversary, it should represent them weak as the scorched thread, feeble as the dissolving smoke. But these are cold forms of speech, compared with the eloquence of the East.

According

such calamitous circumstances, or exposed to such imminent perils; but thy God, whom thou serveſt, is able to ſupport thee under the one, and to deliver thee from the other.—To ſupport! to deliver! O, let me not diſhonour the unlimited greatneſs of his power. He is able to exalt thee, from the deepeſt diſtreſs, to the utmoſt triumphant joy; and to make even a complication of evils work together for thy everlaſting good. He is able, not only to accompliſh what I have been ſpeaking, but to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can aſk, or think*.

O! the

According to the genius of our Bible, all the power that oppoſes the Godly is a mere nothing; or, to ſpeak with a more emphatical air of contempt, a deſtroyed, an extirpated nothing.—Admire this expreſſion, ye that are charmed with daring images, and, (what Tully calls *verbum ardens*) a ſpirited and glowing diction.—Remember this declaration, ye that fight the good fight of faith. The united force of all your enemies, be it ever ſo formidable to the eye of fleſh, is, before your almighty guardian, *nihil nihiliffimum*, not only nothing, but leſs than nothing, and vanity. Job, xii. 20.

* I ſhould, in this place, avoid ſwelling the notes any farther, was it not to take notice of the inimitable paſſage quoted above, and to be found Eph. iii. 20.—Which, if I do not greatly miſtake, is the moſt noble representation of divine power, that it is poſſible for words to frame.—To do all that our tongue can aſk, is a miracle of might. But we often think more than we can expreſs, and are actuated with “groanings unutterable.” Yet, to answer theſe vaſt deſires, is not beyond the accompliſhment of our heavenly Father.—Nay, to make all manner of bleſſings commensurate to the largeſt ſtretch of human expectations, is a ſmall thing with the God of glory. He is able to do above all, that the moſt enlarged apprehenſion can imagine; yea, to do abundantly more, exceeding abundantly more than the mind itſelf, in the utmoſt exertion of its faculties is capable of wiſhing, or knows how to conceive.

O! the wretched condition of the wicked, who have this LORD of all power for their enemy! O! the desperate madness of the ungodly, who provoke the almighty to jealousy!—Besotted creatures! are you able to contend with your maker, and enter the lists against incensed omnipotence? Can you bear the fierceness of his wrath, or sustain the vengeance of his lifted arm? at his presence, though awfully serene, the hills melt like wax, and the “mountains skip like frightened lambs.” At the least intimation of his displeasure, the foundations of nature rock, and the “pillars of Heaven tremble.” How then can a withered leaf endure, when “his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire?”

—Or can any thing screen a guilty worm, when the great and terrible GOD shall whet his glittering sword, and his hand take hold on inexorable judgment? When that hand, which shoots the planets, masses of excessive bulk*, with such surprizing celerity, thro’ the sky: that hand which darts the comets to such unmeasurable distances, beyond the orbit of our remotest planet, beyond the pursuit of the strongest eye: when THAT HAND is stretched out to punish, can the munition of rocks, the intervention of seas, or even interposing worlds, divert the blow?—Consider this, ambition; and bow thy haughty crest. Consider this, disobedience; and bend thy iron sinew. O! consider this, all ye that forgot or affront the tremendous JEHOVAH. He can,

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by

* One of the planets (Saturn) is supposed to be 427,218,300,000,000 miles in bulk. The largest of the planets (Jupiter) is computed at 920,011,200,000,000 miles.—Such enormous magnitude! winged with such prodigious speed!—It raises astonishment beyond expression.—With GOD is terrible Majesty! Job, xxvii. 22.—Who shall not fear THEE, O LORD, and glorify thy name? Rev. xv. 4.

by a single act of his will, lay the universe in utter ruin: and can he want power to bring you, in a moment to the dust of death, or to the flames of Hell? He has,—I say not, ten thousand lightnings to scorch you to ashes; ten thousand thunders to crush you into atoms; but, what is unspeakably more dreadful—He has an army of terrors, even in the look of his angry countenance: his very frown is worse than destruction.

I CANNOT dismiss this subject, without admiring the patience of the blessed GOD. Who, though so “strong and powerful, yet is provoked every day.”—Surely, as is his majesty, so is his mercy; his pity altogether commensurate to his power. If I vilify but the name of an earthly monarch; I lose my liberty, and am confined to the dungeon. If I appear in arms, and draw the sword against my national sovereign; my life is forfeited, and my very blood will scarce atone for the crime. But thee I have dishonoured, O! thou king immortal and invincible! against thee my breast has cherished secret disaffection; my behaviour has risen up in open rebellion; and yet I am spared, I am preserved. Instead of being banished from thy presence; I sit at thy table, and am fed from thy hand. Instead of pursuing me with thunderbolts of vengeance, thy favours surround me on every side. That arm, that injured arm, which might justly fall, with irretrievable ruin, on a traitor’s head; is most graciously stretched out, to caress him, with the tenderest endearments; to cherish him, with every instance of parental kindness.—O! thou mightiest, thou best of beings, how am I pained at my very soul, for such shameful and odious dissimulation! let me always abominate myself, as the basest of creatures; but adore that unwearied long-suffering of thine, which refuses to be irritated; love that unremitted goodness, which

which no acts of ingratitude could stop, or so much as check, in its gracious current. O! let this stubborn heart; which duty could not bind; which threatenings could not awe; be the captive, the willing captive, of such triumphant beneficence.

I HAVE often been struck with wonder at that Almighty skill, which weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance; which proportioned the waters in the hollow of its hand, and adjusted the dust of the earth * by a measure. But, how much more marvellous is that magnificent oeconomy, which poised the stars with inexpressible nicety, and meted out the heavens with a span! where all is prodigiously vast; immensely various; and yet more than mathematically exact. Surely, the wisdom of God manifests itself in the skies, and
shines

* The dust of the earth, in this sublime scripture, signifies the dry land, or solid part of our globe. Which is placed in contradistinction to the whole collection of fluid matter, mentioned in the preceding clause.—Perhaps this remarkable expression may be intended to intimate, not only the extreme niceness, which stated the dimensions of the round world in general, or in the gross; but also that particular exactness, with which the very smallest materials, that constitute its frame (not excepting each individual atom), were calculated and disposed:—q. d. 'Tis a small thing to say, no such enormous redundancies, as unnecessary ridges of mountains, were suffered to subsist. There was not so much as the least grain of sand superfluous, or a single particle of dust deficient.—As the grand aim of the description is, to celebrate the consummate wisdom exemplified in the creation; and to display that perfect proportion, with which every part tallies, coincides, and harmonizes with the whole; I have taken leave to alter the word of our English translation comprehend; and introduce in its stead a term, equally faithful to the Hebrew, and more significative of the Prophet's precise idea. Isa. xl. 12.

shines in those lucid orbs : shines on the contemplative mind, with a lustre incomparably brighter, than that which their united splendors transmit to the eye. — Behold that countless multitude of globes ; consider their amazing bulk ; regard them as the sovereigns of so many systems, each accompanied with his planetary equipage. Upon this supposition, what a multiplicity of mighty spheres must be perpetually running their rounds, in the upper regions ! Yet, none mistake their way, or wander from the goal ; though they pass through trackless and unbounded fields. None fly off from their orbits, into extravagant excursions ; none press in upon their centre, with too near an approach. None interfere with each other in their perennial passage ; or intercept the kindly communications of another's influence*. But all their rotations proceed in eternal harmony ; keeping such time, and observing such laws, as are most exquisitely adapted to the perfection of the whole.

While I contemplate this “ excellent wisdom “ which made the heavens,” and attunes all their motions ; how am I abashed at the mixture of arrogance and folly, which has, at any time, inclined me to murmur at thy dispensations, O LORD ! what is this, but a sort of implicit treason against thy supremacy ; and a tacit denial of thy infinite understanding ? — Hast thou so regularly placed such a wonderful diversity of systems, through the boundless universe ? — Didst thou, without any probationary essays, without any improving retouches, speak them into the most consummate perfection ? — Didst thou continually superintend all their circum-

* The interception of light, by means of an eclipse, happens very rarely : and then is of so short a continuance, as not to be at all inconvenient ; is attended with such circumstances, as render it rather useful, than prejudicial.

circumstances, with a sagacity, that never mistakes the minutest tittle of propriety? And shall I be so unaccountably stupid as to question the justness of thy discernment, “in choosing my inheritance, and fixing the bounds of my Habitation?” — Not a single erratum, in modelling the structure; determining the distance†; and conducting the career of unnumbered Worlds! And shall my peevish humour presume to censure thy interposition, with regard to the affairs of one inconsiderable Creature; whose stature, in such a comparative view, is less than a span; and his present duration, little more than a moment?

O! THOU GOD! “in whose hand my breath is, and whose are all my ways,” let such sentiments as now possess my thoughts, be always lively on my heart! These shall compose my mind into a chearful acquiescence, and thankful submission; even when afflictions gall the sense, or disappointments break my schemes. Then shall I, like the grateful patriarch‡, in all the Changes of my condition, and even in the depths of distress, erect an Altar of adoring Resignation; and inscribe it with the Apostle’s motto, to GOD ONLY WISE. Then, shouldst thou give me leave to be the Carver of my own Fortunes, I would humbly desire to relinquish

† The sun in particular (and let this serve as a specimen of that most geometrical exactness, with which the other celestial bodies are constituted, and all their circumstances regulated) the sun is formed of such a determinate magnitude, and placed at such a convenient distance,—“as not to annoy, but only refresh us, and nourish the ground with its kindly warmth. If it was larger, it would set the earth on fire; if smaller, it would leave it frozen. If it was nearer us, we should be scorched to death; if farther from us, we should not be able to live for want of heat.” Stackhouse’s History of the Bible.

‡ See Gen. xxii. 7, 8.

relinquish the grant, and recommit the disposal of myself to thy unerring beneficence. Fully persuaded that thy counsels, though contrary to my froward inclinations, or even afflictive to my flesh, are incomparably more eligible, than the blind impulse of my own will, however soothing to animal nature.

ON a careless inspection, you perceive no accuracy or uniformity in the position of the heavenly bodies. They appear like an illustrious Chaos; a promiscuous heap of shining globes; neither ranked in order, nor moving by line.—But, what seems confusion is all regularity. What carries a shew of negligence is really the result of the most masterly contrivance. You think, perhaps, they rove in their aerial flight; but they rove by the nicest rule, and without the least error. Their circuits, though seemingly devious; their mazes, though intricate to our apprehensions†; are marked out, not indeed with golden compasses, but by the infinitely more exact determinations of the all-wise spirit.

So, what wears the appearance of calamity, in the allotments appointed for the Godly, has really the nature of a blessing. It issues from fatherly love, and will terminate in the richest good. If Joseph is snatched from the embraces of an indulgent parent, and abandoned to slavery in a foreign land; it is in order to save the holy family from perishing by famine; and to preserve “the seed, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed.” If he falls into the deepest disgrace, it is on purpose that he may rise to the highest honours.

Even

† ——— Mazes intricate,
Eccentric, intervold; yet regular
Then most, when most irregular they seem.

MILTON.

Even the confinement of the prison, by the unsearchable workings of providence, opens his way to the right-hand of the throne itself.—Let the most afflicted servant of JESUS wait the final upshot of things: and he will discover then the apparent expediency of all those tribulations; which now, perhaps, he can hardly admit, without reluctance; or suffer without some struggles of dissatisfaction. Then, the gushing tear, and the heaving sigh, will be turned into tides of gratitude, and hymns of holy wonder.

IN the mean time, let no audacious railer tax the divine procedure; but, adoring where we cannot comprehend, let us expect the evolution of the mysterious plan. Then, shall every eye perceive; that the seeming labyrinths of providence were the most direct and compendious way, to effect His general purposes of grace, and to bring about each one's particular happiness†—Then, also, shall it be clearly shewn, in the presence of applauding worlds; Why, virtue pined in want, while vice rioted in affluence: Why, amiable innocence so often dragged the dungeon chain, while horrid guilt trailed the robe of State.—The day of universal audit, that day of everlasting retribution will not only vindicate, but magnify the whole management of Heaven. The august Sessions shall close with this unanimous, this glorious acknowledgment: “Though clouds and darkness, impenetrable by any human scrutiny were sometimes round about the supreme Conductor of Things; yet Righteousness and judgment were the constant

ha-

† ————— The moral world

Which, though to us it seems embroil'd, moves on
In higher order; fitted, and impell'd,
By Wisdom's finest hand, and issuing all
In gen'ral Good.

THOMS. Winter, l. 584, last edit.

habitation of his seat †; the invariable standard of all his administrations.—While we view (if I may illustrate the greatest truths, by inferior occurrences) while we view the Arras, on the side of least distinction, it is void of any elegant fancy; without any nice strokes of art; nothing but a confused jumble of incoherent threads. No sooner is the piece beheld in its proper aspect, but the suspected rudeness vanishes, and the most curious arrangement takes place; we are charmed with designs of the finest taste, and figures of the most graceful Forms; all is shaped with Symmetry; all is clad in Beauty.

THE goodness of GOD is most eminently displayed in the skies.—Could we take an understanding Survey, of whatever is formed by the divine architect, throughout the whole extent of material things; our minds would be charmed with their matchless excellencies, and our tongues echo back that great encomium, they are “very, very good.” Most beautiful † in themselves; contrived by unerring wisdom, and executed with inimitable skill: Most useful * in their functions; exactly fitting the
Places

† Psal. xcvi. 2.

* This *καλοκαγαθία* of the universe, and all its parts has been very highly, and very justly extolled, by the antient enquirers into nature. And was, indeed, an illustrious scene, spread before the sages of the heathen world; wherein to contemplate the goodness, and the glories, of the supreme being.—It was nobly said, by a Pagan philosopher, on this occasion, *Εἰς εὐωχίαν μεταβυθθῆναι τὸν Θεὸν μέλλοντα δημιουργεῖν*. That GOD, when he undertook the work of creation, transformed himself into love.—But he need not transform himself into this amiable Principle; for, “God is Love:” As was much more loftily said by one, whom that philosopher would have termed a barbarian, 1 John. iv. 8.

Places they fill, and completely answering the Purposes, for which they were intended.— All the parts of the inanimate creation proclaim, both by their intrinsic and relative excellencies, the all-diffusive beneficence of their Maker.

How much more wonderful are the displays of divine Indulgence, in the worlds of Life! Because, dead matter is incapable of delight; therefore, the gracious Creator has raised innumerable ranks of perceptive existence: such as are qualified to taste his bounty, enjoy each a happiness suited to its peculiar state. With this view, he furnished the regions of inferior nature, with a most numerous series of sensitive beings. The waters teem with shoals of finny inhabitants. The dry land swarms with animals of every order. The dwellings of the Firmament are occupied by multitudes of winged people. Not so much as a green Leaf, philosophers say, but lodges and accommodates its puny animalcule tenants ¶.—And wherefore this diversity, this profusion of living Creatures; flying the Air, treading the Ground, and gliding through the paths of the Sea? For this noble reason,—

That

¶ A very celebrated poet, in a beautiful paragraph on this subject, informs his readers, that all nature swarms with life. In subterranean cells, the earth heaves with vital motion. Even the hard stone, in the very inmost recesses of its impenetrable citadel, holds multitudes of animated inhabitants. The pulp of mellow fruit, and all the productions of the orchard, feed the invisible nations. Each liquid, whether of acid taste, or milder relish, abounds with various forms of sensitive existence. Nor is the pure stream, or transparent air, without their colonies of unseen people.— In which constitution of things, we have a wonderful instance, not only of the divine goodness to those minute beings, in giving them a capacity for animal gratifications; but of his tender care for mankind, in making them imperceptible to our senses.

These,

That the great Sovereign may exercise his super-abundant goodness; that his Table may be furnished with millions and millions of Guests; that He may fill every hour, every moment, their mouths with Food, or their Hearts with gladness.

BUT, what a small Theatre are three or four elements, for the operations of JEHOVAH's Bounty! His magnificent liberality, scorns such scanty limits. If you ask, Wherefore has he created all Worlds, and replenished them with an unknown multiplicity of Beings; rising, one above another, in an endless Gradation of still richer endowments, and still nobler capacities? The Answer is,—— For the manifestation of his own glory, and especially for the Communication of his inexhaustible Beneficence †.——The great Creator could propose no advantage to himself. His bliss is incapable of any addition. "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were made," He was supremely happy, in his own independent and all sufficient self. His grand design

—— These, conceal'd
By the kind art of forming heav'n, escape
The grosser eye of man: For, if the worlds
In worlds inclos'd should on his senses burst;
From cates ambrosial, and the nectar'd bowl,
He'd turn abhorrent; and, in dead of night,
When silence sleeps o'er all, be stunn'd with noise.

THOMPSON'S Summer.

† A sacred writer, considering this pleasing subject; and confining his observation within the narrow limits of his own country; cries out, with a mixture of amazement and gratitude, "How great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty!"—Who then can forbear being lost in wonder, and transported with delight; when he extends his survey, to those infinitely more copious communications of divine bounty; which, like salutary and refreshing streams, run through all worlds; and make not only the little Valleys of a single kingdom, but the Immensity of creation laugh and sing? Zech. ix. 17.

design therefore, in erecting so many stately fabrics ; and peopling them with so many tribes of inhabitants ; was, to transfuse his exuberant kindness, and impart felicity in all its forms. Ten thousand worlds, stocked with ten thousand-times ten thousand ranks, of sensitive and intelligent existence, are so many spacious gardens ; which, with rivers of communicated joy, this ever-flowing fountain waters continually.

BOUNDLESS ¶, and (which raises our idea of this divine principle, to the very highest degree of perfection) disinterested ¶ munificence ! How inexpressibly amiable is the blessed God, considered in this charming light ! Is it possible to conceive any excellence, so adorable and lovely ; as infinite benevolence, guided by unerring wisdom, and exerting Almighty Power, on purpose to make a whole universe happy ?—O my soul, what an irresistible attractive is here ! What a most worthy object, for thy most fervent affection ! Shall now every glittering toy become a rival to this transcendently beneficent Being, and rob him of thy heart ?—O ! no. Let his creating arm teach thee, to trust in thefulness of his sufficiency :—Let his all-superintending eye incline thee, to submit to his decrees :—And let his bounty ; so freely vouchsafed ; so amply diffused ; win thee to love him, with all the warmest affections of a grateful and admiring soul : win thee to serve him, not with joyless awe, or slavish dread, but with unfeigned alacrity, and a delightful complacency.

BUT,

¶¶ In this sense, There is none good, but one, that is God. None universally and essentially good : None whose goodness extends itself, in an infinite variety of blessings, to every capable object ; or, who always dispenses his favours, from the sole principle of free and disinterested benevolence.

BUT, if the goodness of GOD is so admirably seen, in the works of nature, and the favours of providence; with what a noble superiority, does it even triumph, in the mystery of redemption †! Redemption is the brightest mirror, in which to contemplate this most lovely attribute of the deity. Other gifts are only as mites from the divine treasury; but redemption opens, I had almost said exhausts, all the stores of his glorious grace. Herein, “God commendeth his love ¶: not only manifests, but renders it perfectly marvellous: manifests it in so stupendous a manner, that it is beyond parallel; beyond thought; and “above all blessing and praise.”——Was HE not thy Son everlasting God, thy only son; the son of thy bosom from eternal ages; the highest object of thy complacential delight? Was not thy love to this adorable son, incomparably greater than the tenderest affection of any,

† In this, and in other parts of the Contemplations, the reader will observe, that the attributes of the DEITY are represented, as shining, with more distinguished lustre, in the wonders of redemption, than in the works of creation. If such remarks should seem to be unprecedented, or to stand in need of a vindication; permit me to subjoin the sentiments of a great critic, equally versed in both those sublime theories. “——Tully, says he, requires, in his perfect orator some skill in the nature of heavenly bodies; because, his mind will become more extensive and unconfined; and, when he descends to treat of human affairs, he will both think and write in a more exalted and magnificent manner. For the same reason, that excellent master would have recommended the study of those great and glorious mysteries, which revelation has discovered to us; to which the noblest parts of this system of the world are as much inferior as the creature is less excellent than the creator.” Spect. Vol. VIII. No. 633.

¶ Rom. v. 8.

any, or the united affections of all mortal parents? Was not the blessed Jesus more illustrious in excellency, than all angels; more exalted in dignity, than all heavens? And yet, didst thou resign him, for poor mortals; for vile sinners? Couldst thou see him descend, from his royal throne; and take up his abode, in the sordid stable? See him forego the homage of the seraphim; and stand exposed to the reproachful indignities, of an insolent rabble? See him arraigned at the bar, and sentenced to death; numbered with malefactors, and nailed to the gibbet; bathed in his own innocent blood, and pouring out his soul in agonies of sorrow?—— Could the father, the father himself, with unknown philanthropy, say; “It must, it shall, be so? My pity to rebellious man pleads, and prevails. Awake, therefore, O sword ¶, edged with divine wrath. Awake; and be sheathed in that immaculate breast; pierce that dearly beloved heart. I am content, that my son endure the sharpness of death, rather than sinful mortals perish for ever.”—— Incomprehensible love! May it, henceforward, be the favourite subject of my meditation; more delightful to my musing mind, than applause to the ambitious ear! May it be the darling theme of my discourse; sweeter to my tongue, than the droppings of the honeycomb to my taste! May it be my choicest comfort, through all the changes of life; and my reviving cordial even in the last extremities of dissolution itself!

A PROPHET, contemplating, with a distant survey, this unexampled instance of Almighty Love, is wrapt into a transport of delight. At a loss for proper acknowledgments, he calls upon the whole universe to aid his labouring breast, and supply

supply his lack of praise. Sing melodiously, ye vaulted heavens; exult, and even leap for gladness, thou cumberous earth; ye mountains, break your long silence, and burst into peals of loud acclamation†; for the Lord, by this precious gift, and this great salvation, hath comforted his people.—A sacred historian hath left it upon record; that, at the first exhibition of this ravishing scene, there was with the angel, who brought the blessed tidings, a multitude of the heavenly host; praising God, and making the concave of the skies resound with their Hallelujahs. At the dawn of the Sun of righteousness, when He was beginning to rise with healing in his wings, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. — And shall man, whom this gracious dispensation principally respects; shall man, who is the centre of all these gladdening rays; shall he have no heart to adore, no anthem to celebrate, This “Love without end, and without measure grace?”

MILT.

How clear is the face of thy sky, and how perfectly pure! Clearer than the limpid stream, more pure

† Isa. xlix. 13.—I have not adhered to our common translation, but endeavoured to preserve, somewhat more faithfully, the noble Pathos, and inimitable Energy of the sacred original.—The love of God manifested in a divine and dying Saviour, is a blessing of such inconceivable richness; as must render all acknowledgments flat, and all encomiums languid. Yet, I think, the most poetical and most emphatical celebration of that unspeakable instance of goodness, is contained in this rapturous exclamation of the prophet. Which intimates, with a wonderful majesty of sentiment, that even the whole compass of the inanimate creation, could it be sensible of the benefit, and capable of delight, would express its gratitude, in all these demonstrations of the most lively and exuberant joy.

pure than the polished crystal. That stately ceiling; fretted with gold, and stretched to an extent of many millions of leagues, is not disfigured with a single flaw. That azure mantle; embroidered with stars, and spacious enough to form a covering for unnumbered worlds; is without the least spot or wrinkle.——Yet, this can scarce yield us, so much as a faint representation of the Divine Purity. God, is a God of the most immaculate excellence. His ways are uprightness itself: his counsels and words, the very sanctity of wisdom, and of truth. The laws, which he has given to universal nature, are exquisitely contrived, and beyond all possibility of improvement. The precepts, which he has appointed for the human race; are a compleat summary, of all that is honourable in itself, and perfective of the rational mind.—Not the least oversight, in planning a series of events for all futurity; nor the least mal-administration, in managing the affairs of every age, since time began; of every nation, under the whole heaven.——Pardon these disparaging expressions. A negative perfection is far, far beneath thy dignity, O Thou most Highest †. In all these instances; in all thy

† O Thou most Highest.—This expression occurs more than once, in the Psalms used by the established church, and is, I think, one of those Beauties; which, because often exhibited, generally escape our notice. It is a superlative formed on a superlative; and, though not strictly conformable to grammatical rules, is nobly superior to them all.—The language seems to be sensible of its own deficiency, when the incomprehensible JEHOVAH is addressed, or celebrated. Oppressed, as it were, with the glories of the subject, it labours after a more emphatical manner of diction, than the ordinary forms of speech afford.—It is, if I rightly judge, one of those daring and happy peculiarities

thy acts, and all thy attributes; thou art not only holy, but “glorious in holiness.”

So inconceivably holy is the Lord God of Hosts, that he sees defilement even in the brightness of yonder firmament. Those living sapphires, before his majesty, close their lustre. “He looketh even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight.” How much less man, who, in his fallen and depraved state, is little better than a worm, that crawls in the corrupted carcase; and the son of man, who, by reason of his manifold actual impurities, is too justly compared to an insect, that wallows amidst stench and putrefaction? — Is

rities of a masterly genius, which Mr. Pope so finely describes; and while he describes, exemplifies:

Great wits sometimes may gloriously offend,
And rise to faults true critics dare not mend:
From vulgar bounds with brave disorder part,
And snatch a grace beyond the reach of art.

Essay on Criticism.

St. Paul's — *ελαχιστον των αγιων* — is a beautiful passage of the like nature; which our translators have very properly rendered, less than the least of all Saints. — His — *πολλω μαλλον κρεισσον* — is another instance of the same kind. But here, the English version fails. Far better — is extremely flaccid compared with the nervous original. And I greatly question, whether it is possible to translate the sentence with equal conciseness, and equal spirit. See Eph. iii. 8. Phil. i. 23.

† Job, xxv. 5, 6. I submit it to the judgment of the learned, whether this is not the true meaning of the text. — It may not be able, perhaps, to recommend itself, to the squeamishly nice critic; or to those who are always extolling the supposed dignity of the human nature. But it seems, in preference to every other interpretation, suitable to the sacred context; and is far, far from being injurious to the character of that apostate race,

— Is there not then abundant cause, for the most irreproachable and eminent of mankind, to renounce all arrogant pretensions; to lay aside every assuming air; to take nothing but shame and confusion to themselves? A holy sufferer, and a holy Prophet, felt such humbling impressions, from a glimpse of the uncreated purity. I abhor myself in dust and ashes †, was the declaration of the one: I am a man of unclean lips §, the confession of the other.—And should not this teach us all, to adore the divine mercies, for that precious purifying fountain †; which was foretold from the foundations of the world; but was opened at that awful juncture, when knotty whips tore the flesh; when ragged thorns mangled the temples; when sharpened nails cut fresh sluices for the crimson

P current;

Race, which is “altogether become abominable,” and “is as an unclean thing.”—On this supposition, there is not only an apparent, but a very striking contrast, between the purity of God, and the pollution of man: The purity of God, which outshines the moon, and eclipses the stars; the pollution of man, which renders him as loathsome to the all-seeing eye, as the vilest vermin are in ours.—Without assigning this sense to the passage, I cannot discern the force of the antithesis, or indeed the propriety of the sentiment: Worms, in the general, give us an idea of meanness and infirmity; not of defilement and impurity; unless they are insects of such a particular kind, and considered in such noisome circumstances.—The two words of the Original—רמח and תולעה—are evidently used in this signification by Moses and Isaiah; by the one, to denote the vermin, that devoured the putrified manna; by the other, to express the reptiles, which swarm in the body that sees corruption. Exod. xvi. 20. Isa. xiv. 11. † Job, xlii. 6. § Isa. vi. 5.

† In that day there shall be a Fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness. Zechar. xiii. 1.

current; when the gash of the Spear compleated the dreadful work, and forthwith flowed there, from the wounded heart, blood and water?

ESPECIALLY since the GOD, in whose sight the very Heavens are not unspotted; though so curiously fine, and "spread out like a molten looking-glass;"—since this GOD saw no Blemish in his dear son. His all-penetrating and jealous eye, discerned nothing amiss, nothing defective, in our glorious Redeemer. Nothing amiss? Yea, he bore this most illustrious testimony, concerning his holy child JESUS: "In him I am pleased; I am well pleased; I acquiesce, with intire complacency, and the highest delight in his person; his undertaking; and the whole execution of his office."—How should this thought enliven our hopes; while the other mortifies our pride? Might not our hearts to spring within us, and even leap for joy; from the repeated assurances given us by revelation, that such a divinely excellent being is our Mediator? What apparent reason has every believer, to adopt the blessed virgin's exclamation! "My soul doth magnify the LORD for this transcendent mercy; and my spirit rejoices, not in wide-extended harvests, waving over my fertile glebe*; nor in armies vanquished, and leaving, the peculiar treasure of nations for my spoil*; but in an infinitely richer, nobler Blessing, even in GOD my Saviour."—That a person so sublime and perfect, has vouchsafed to become my surety: to give himself for my ransom in the world below; and act as my advocate, in the royal presence above: yea, to make my recovery, the reward of his Sufferings;
my

* * The inspired Penman, from these two occasions of distinguished Joy, sets forth the incomparably greater delight, which arises from the Gift of a Saviour, and the Blessing of Redemption. Isa. ix. ver. 3. compared with ver. 6.

my final Felicity, the honour of his mediatorial Kingdom !

WHEN an innumerable multitude † of bodies, many of them more than a hundred thousand miles in diameter‡, are all set in motion :—when the orbits, in which they perform their periodical revolutions, are extended at the rate of several hundreds of millions :—when each has a distinct and separate Sphere, for finishing his vast Circuit :—when none knows, what it is to be cramped, but most freely expatiates in his unbounded Career :—when every one is placed at such an immense Remove from each other ; that they appear to their respective inhabitants, only as so many spots of light :—O ! how astonishing must be the expanse, which yields room for all these mighty globes, and their widely-diffused operations ! To what prodigious lengths did the Almighty builder stretch his line, when he marked out the stupendous platform !—I wonder at such an immeasurable extent. My very thoughts are lost in this Abyss of space. But, be it known to mortals ; be it never forgot by sinners ; that, in all its most surprising amplitude, it is small, it is scanty, compared with the bounty and the mercy of its Maker.

P 2

HIS

† This refers, not only to the Planets which pass and repass about our Sun, but also to the other Planetary Worlds, which are supposed to attend the several fixed Stars.

‡ The Diameter of Jupiter is calculated at 130,653 miles, while his Orbit is reckoned to consist of 895,134,000. Which computation, according to the maxims of Astronomy, and the laws of proportion, may, as is taken for granted in the Contemplations, be applied to other planets revolving round other suns.

His bounty is absolutely without limits †, and without end. The most lavish generosity cannot exhaust, or even diminish his munificence. O! all ye tribes of men; or rather, all ye classes of intelligent creatures; ye are not straitened in the liberality of your ever-blessed Creator; be not straitened in your own expectations. “Open your mouth wide, and he shall fill it” with copious and continual draughts from the cup of joy. Your God, on whom is your whole dependance, is more than able; is more than willing; to “supply all your need, according to his riches in Glory.”—When the LORD JEHOVAH is the giver, and his grace the § gift; let your wishes be unbounded, and your cravings insatiable. All that created beings can possibly covet, is but a very small pittance of that unknown happiness, which the everlasting Benefactor is ready to bestow. Form
not

† By bounty, I mean not the actual exercise, or the effects, of this excellency in the deity. These are, and always must be, through the immense perfection of the attribute, and the necessary scantiness of the recipient, bounded. But, I would be understood, as speaking of the divine power, and the divine will, to exert divine beneficence. These, can have no real, no imaginable limits. These, after a communication of blessings, distributed to unnumbered worlds, continued thro’ unnumbered ages, must *still* have more to bestow; for *ever* have more to bestow; *infinitely* more to bestow, than it is possible for creation itself to receive.

§ 2 Cor. ix. 8. God is able to make all grace abound towards you, that ye, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.—How beautiful, and emphatical is this description! inferior to nothing, but that extent of ability, and those riches of liberality, which it so eloquently celebrates. Does it not exhaust all the powers of language; while it attempts to give us a specimen of the munificence of the LORD?

not your estimate of the supreme beneficence, from those narrow models of mortal kindness; which either your own experience has observed, or the history of Ages has recorded. Suppose every charitable disposition, which warms the hearts of the human race, added to those more enlarged affections, which glow in heavenly Bosoms; what were they all, even in their highest exercise, compared with the benignity of the divine nature?—Bless me then, Thou eternal source of love; bless all that reverence thy holy name; according to thy own most profuse goodness: whose great prerogative it is to disdain all measure. O! bless us, in proportion to that Grace; the richness of which (unutterable by the tongues of men, and of angels) was once spoke in the groans, and written in the wounds of thy expiring son!

AND as for the mercy of GOD, it is “greater than the heavens;” more extensive than the dimensions of the sky. Charming thought! transporting reflection! Let me indulge thee once more*. Let me think over the noble Displays of this lovely attribute; and, while I admire the trophies of forgiving goodness, add one to the number.

P 3

—With

* This refers to page 81. of Reflections on a flower-garden.—The following pages, to the 142d, exhibit a digressive view of the Divine mercy. I thought it proper to apprize my Reader of this excursion; though, I hope, it will be needless to offer an apology for dwelling so long upon this delightful theme. Who can complain of tediousness, while I speak consolation to distressed, and recovery to ruined creatures? The divine mercy is the sole Fountain of all our present and future blessings. In proportion to this benign attribute, human hopes arise, and human felicity flows. Who, therefore, can be weary of viewing and reviewing; when the lengths and breadths of forgiving grace, are the ravishing prospect?

—With what amiable and affecting colours is this represented in the Parable of the Prodigal ! What could induce that foolish youth, to forsake his gracious father ? Had he not been tenderly cherished by the good parent ; and loaded with Benefits from his indulgent hand ? Were not the Restraints of parental government an easy Yoke ? or rather a preservative from Ruin ? Notwithstanding every endearing obligation, he revolts from his duty ; and launches out into such scandalous irregularities, as were a dishonour to his Family, and destructive to himself. — But, when afflictions brought him to a sense of his folly, and sharp necessity drove him to a submissive return ; did the injured father discover the least resentment of mind ? Quite the reverse. He espied him, while he was yet a great way off ; and the moment he beheld the profligate creature, “ his bowels sounded like an harp,” touched with notes divinely soft. He never once thinks of the riotous living, and infamous course of debaucheries. Pity, parental pity, passes an act of oblivion ; and, in one instant, cancels a series of long continued provocations. — So strong are the Yearnings of fatherly affection ; that he even runs, to receive the naked and destitute wretch, to his arms. And is there a single frown in his brow, or one upbraiding word on his tongue ? — Instead of reproaching him for his odious excesses ; he falls on his neck, and snatches him to his eager embraces. Instead of rejecting him with indignation, for his undutiful extravagance ; he kisses him with tears of delight : and rejoices at his return from folly ; as he formerly rejoiced on the day of his nativity. — When this companion of harlots opens his mouth, before he speaks, the father hears. He interrupts him in the midst of his intended Speech, the overflowings of his compassionate Heart can brook no delay. He seems to be
uneasy

uneasy himself, 'till he has made the afflicted penitent glad, with the assurance of his acceptance, and the choicest of his favours. While the poor abashed offender seeks nothing more than not to be abhorred; he is thoroughly reconciled. While he requests no other indulgence, than only to be treated as the meanest servant; he is caressed, and honoured, as the dearest of children.— Was there ever so bright and winning a picture of the tenderest mercy; most freely vouchsafed to the most unworthy of creatures? Yet thus, my soul; and thus, my fellow-sinner; will the LORD GOD of everlasting compassions receive us; if, with a contrite spirit, and lively faith, we turn to him through JESUS CHRIST.

' WHERE sin has abounded,' says the proclamation from the court of Heaven, ' grace doth much more abound.'— By this, Manassch, a monster of barbarity, and an adept in Iniquity, becomes a child of forgiving love, and an heir of immortal glory. — Behold that bitter and bloody persecutor Saul; when, breathing out threatenings *, and bent upon
P 4 slaughter,

* Acts ix. 1. Σαυλ εἰς ἔμπνεον ἀπειλῆς καὶ φονῆς
 "Saul yet breathing out threatening and slaughter."— What a representation is here of a mind, mad with rage, and abandoned to the fiercest extremes of barbarity! I scarce know, whether I am more shocked at the persecutor's savage disposition, or charmed with the Evangelists lively description.—The adverb—εἰς—seems to refer to chap. viii. ver. 3. and has, in this connection, a peculiar force. The havock he had committed, the inoffensive families he had already ruined, were not sufficient to assuage his vengeful spirit. They were only a taste; which instead of glutting the blood-hound made him more closely pursue the track, and more eagerly pant for destruction.—He is still athirst for violence and murder. So restless and insatiable is his thirst, that he even breathes out threatening and slaughter. His words are spears and arrows, and
his

slaughter, he worried the lambs, and put to death the disciples of the blessed JESUS. Who, upon the principles of human judgment, would not have pronounced him a vessel of wrath, destined to unavoidable damnation? Nay, would not have been ready to conclude, that, if there were heavier chains, and a deeper dungeon, in the world of woe; they must surely be reserved, for such an implacable enemy of true goodness? Yet, (admire, and adore, the riches of almighty grace!) this Saul, is elected into the goodly fellowship of the Prophets; is numbered with the noble army of Martyrs; and makes a distinguished figure among the glorious company of the Apostles.—The Corinthians were flagitious, even to a proverb. Some of them wallowed in such abominable vices, and habituated themselves to such outrageous acts of injustice, as were a reproach to human nature. Yet, even these sons of violence, and slaves of sensuality, “were washed; were sanctified; were justified*.” Washed, in the precious blood of a dying Redeemer; sanctified, by the powerful operations of the blessed spirit; justified, through the infinitely tender mercies of a gracious GOD. And those, who were once the burden of the earth, are now the joy of Heaven, and the delight of Angels.

THERE is another instance in scripture, which most loudly publishes that sweetest of the divine names, “The LORD, the LORD GOD, merciful and

his tongue a sharp sword. 'Tis as natural for him to menace the christians, as to breath the air. Nay, they bleed every hour, every moment, in the purposes of his rancorous heart. It is only owing to want of power, that every syllable he utters, every breath he draws, does not deal about deaths, and cause some of the innocent disciples to fall.

* 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11.

and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." An instance this, which exceeds all the former; which exceeds whatever can be imagined; which if I was to forget, the very stones might cry out, and sound it in my ears. I mean the case of those sinners, who murdered the Prince of Peace, and LORD of Glory. These men could scarce have the shadow of an excuse for their crime; hardly a circumstance, to extenuate their guilt. They were well acquainted with his exemplary conversation; they had often heard his heavenly doctrines; they were almost daily spectators of his unequalled miracles. They therefore had all possible reason to honour him, as the most illustrious of Beings; and to receive him—into their houses—their arms—their very hearts—as the most inestimable of blessings. Yet, notwithstanding all these engaging motives to love him, even above their own lives; they seize his person; asperse his character; drag him before a heathen tribunal; and extort a sentence of death, against innocence and holiness itself. Never was the vilest slave so contumeliously abused; nor the most execrable malefactor so barbarously executed. The sun was confounded at the shocking scene; and one cannot but wonder, how the avenging lightnings could withhold their flashes. The earth trembled at the horrid deed; and why, why did it not cleave asunder, and open a passage, for such blood-thirsty miscreants, into the nethermost Hell? Shall these ever hope to obtain forgiveness from the righteous judge? Shall not these be consigned over to inexorable wrath, and the severest torments?—O the miraculous effects of divine grace! O the triumphant goodness of GOD our Saviour! Many even of these impious wretches, at the descent of the Holy

Ghost, were convinced of their enormous sin ; were wounded with penitential remorse ; fled to the sanctuary of the cross, and laid hold on the horns of that altar ; had their pardon ratified by the baptismal seal ; and, continuing in the Apostles doctrine, were made partakers of the kingdom of Heaven : where they now shine, as so many everlasting Monuments of most distinguished Mercy ; and receive beatitude past utterance, from that very Redeemer, whom once “ with wicked hands they crucified and slew.” — Well might the prophet cry out, with a pleasing amazement, “ Who is a GOD like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by transgression * ? ” — Let all flesh remember ; let all flesh rejoice ; That with the LORD there is such Mercy, and with his CHRIST such plentiful Redemption.

WHAT a grand and majestic Dome is the Sky ! And where are the Pillars that support the stately Concave ? What art, most exactly true, balanced the pressure ; and what props, of insuperable strength, sustain the weight ? How is that immeasurable arch upheld, unshaken, and unimpaired ; while so many generations of busy mortals have sunk and disappeared, as bubbles upon the stream ; — If those Stars are of such an amazing bulk ; how are they also fastened, in their lofty situation ? By what miracle in mechanics, are so many thousands of ponderous orbs kept from falling upon our heads ; kept from dashing both the world to pieces, and its inhabitants to death ; are they hung in golden, or adamantine chains ? Rest they their enormous load, on rocks of marble, or columns of brass ? No ; they are pendulous in fluid æther : and yet are more immoveably fixed, than if the everlasting mountains lent their ridges for a basis. The almighty architect

test stretches out the North, and its whole starry train, over the empty place. He hangs the earth, and all the ethereal globes upon nothing*. Yet are their foundations laid so sure, that they can "never be moved at any time."

No unfit representation, to the sincere christian, of his final perseverance†: but such as points out the

* Job xxvi. 7:

† With regard to the final perseverance of the true believer; I am sensible, that this point is not a little controverted.—The sentiments which follow, are my stedfast belief. It is by no means proper, in a work of this nature, to enter upon a discussion of the subject. Neither have I room, so much as to hint, what might be urged for its support.—Let my reader observe, that I am far from delivering it as essential to christianity, or necessary to salvation. Millions of the very contrary conviction are, I doubt not, high in the favour of God; and in a growing meetness, for his heavenly kingdom. As I blame none for rejecting, none, I hope, will be offended with me for espousing, this particular doctrine.—To be of different opinions, at least in some inferior instances, seems an unavoidable consequence of our present state: where ignorance in part, cleaves to the wisest minds; and prejudice easily besets the most impartial judgments. It may also turn to our common advantage; and afford opportunity for exercising the healing virtues of moderation, meekness and forbearance.—Let me only be permitted to ask whether this tenet does not evidently tend to establish the comfort of the christian; to magnify the fidelity of God our Saviour; and whether, far from countenancing sloth, or encouraging remissness, to know that our labour shall not be in vain, is not the most prevailing inducement to abound in the work of the Lord? 1 Cor. xv. 58.

Is any one inclined to examine the reasons which have made the author a proselyte to this persuasion? He may find them displayed in the celebrated paper, delivered by the most eminent Divines of the church of England, at the ever-memorable Synod of Dordt—(See

Acta

the cause which effects it; and constitutes the pledge, which ascertains it.—His nature is all enfeebled. He is not able, of himself, to think a good thought. He has no visible safeguard, nor any sufficiency of his own. And yet, whole legions of formidable enemies are combined to compass his ruin. The world lays unnumbered snares for his feet: the Devil is incessantly urging the siege, by a multitude of fiery darts, or wily temptations: the flesh, like a perfidious inmate, under colour of friendship, and a specious pretence of pleasure, is always forward to betray his integrity.—But amidst all these threatening circumstances of personal weakness, and imminent danger, an invincible

Acta Synod. Dodrac. Part 2. page 403 of the Latin edition, published in a single quarto volume).—Those, who have no opportunity of consulting the memoirs of that venerable assembly, I would refer to the works of the indefatigable and very learned Turretin, or to those of the candid and elegant Witsius.

The latest and fullest view of the point, which I ever remember to have met with, in any of our English writers, is in the Lime-street Lectures, which are a defence of several most important doctrines of the gospel, and contained in two octavo volumes; the united labours of nine modern Divines; most of whom are well known to the world, by their other evangelical and useful writings. In those Lectures, the final perseverance of the Saints is very particularly stated, and, to my apprehension at least, most satisfactorily proved; the arguments usually urged against it, impartially considered, and I cannot but think (with all due deference, to the judgment of others) unanswerably confuted.

And here (not to swell this note any farther) I shall only just hint, that the judicious Hooker (an authority, perhaps, as weighty and unexceptionable as any that can well be produced) gives a solemn attestation to this tenet, in a short discourse on the perpetuity of faith, subjoined to his Ecclesiastical Polity. Folio Edition.

fible aid is his defence. "I will uphold thee, says the blessed GOD, with the right hand of my righteousness*." O comfortable truth! The arm, which fixes the stars in their orbits, and guides the planets in their course, is stretched out to preserve the heirs of salvation.—"My sheep, adds the great Redeemer, are mine; and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand†." What words are these! And did they come from HIM, who hath all power in heaven, and on earth! And were they spoke to every unfeigned, though feeble follower, of the great Shepherd? Then Omnipotence itself must be vanquished; before they can be destroyed, either by the seductions of fraud, or the assaults of violence.

If you ask therefore, what security we have of enduring to the end, and continuing faithfully unto death?—The very same that establishes the heavens, and settles the ordinances of the universe. Can these be thrown into confusion‡? Then may the true believer draw back unto perdition. Can the sun be dislodged from his sphere, and rush lawlessly through the sky? Then, and then only, can the faith of GOD's elect § be finally overthrown—Be of good courage, then, my soul; rely on those divine succours, which are so solemnly stipulated, so faithfully promised. Though thy grace be languid, as the glimmering spark; though the overflowings of corruption threaten it with total extinction; yet, since the great JEHOVAH has undertaken to cherish the dim principle, "many waters cannot quench it, nor all floods drown it." Nay though it were feeble as the smoking flax ||, Almighty

* Isa. xli. 10.

† John x. 28.

‡ Jer. xxxi. 35, 36.

§ Tit. i. 2.

|| The tenderness and faithfulness of God to his people, are finely pictured by the prophet Isaiah, chap. xlii.

mighty goodness stands engaged, to augment the heat; to raise the fire, and feed the flame; till it beam forth, a Lamp of immortal Glory, in the heavens.

AND, as to the Faithfulness of a covenanting God; this may be emblematically seen, in the Stability of the heavenly Bodies, and the Perpetuity of their Motions¶. — Those that are fixed continue unalterably in their stations. No injurious shocks; no violence of conflicting elements, are able to displace those everlasting Hinges, on which dependent worlds revolve. Through the whole flight of time, they recede not so much as a hair's breadth, from the precise central point of their respective systems. — While the Erratic perform their prodigious stages, without any intermission, or the least embarrassment. How soon, and how easily,

xlii. ver. 3. Which passage; because of its rich consolation, and uncommon beauty, is deservedly adopted by St. Matthew, and ingrafted into the system of evangelical truths — “He will not himself break, nor suffer to be broken by any other, the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.” Was it possible to have chosen two more delicate, and expressive representations? Could any image, be more significant of a very infirm, and enfeebled faith, than the flexible reed, that bends before every wind: which, besides its natural weakness, is made abundantly weaker by being bruised: and so, ready to fall in pieces of itself? — Nor could any thing, with a more pathetic exactness, describe the extreme imbecillity, of that other principle of the divine life, love; than the state of the flax, which is but just beginning to burn; and, consequently, liable to be put out by the least blast; or rather of the wick of the lamp, when it is not kindled into so much as a glimmering flame, but only breathing smoke, and uncertain whether it shall take fire or no. Matth. xii. 20.

¶ Psal. cxix. 89, 90.

easily, is the most finished piece of human machinery disconcerted! But all the celestial movements are so nicely adjusted; all their operations so critically proportioned; and their mutual dependencies so strongly connected; that they prolong their beneficial courses, throughout all ages. While mighty cities are overwhelmed with ruin, and their very names lost in oblivion: while vast empires are swept from their foundations, and leave not so much as a shadowy trace of their ancient magnificence: While all terrestrial things are subject to vicissitude, and fluctuating in uncertainty: These are permanent in their duration: invariable in their functions; "not one faileth."—Who doubts the constant succession of day and night? or the regular returns of summer and winter? And why, O! why shall we doubt the veracity of God, or distrust the accomplishment of his holy word? Can the ordinances of heaven depart? Then only can God forget to be gracious; or neglect the performance of his promise.—Nay, our Lord gives us yet firmer ground of assiance. He affords us a surer bottom for our faith, than the fundamental laws of the universe. "Heaven and earth, he says, may pass away; but, not one jot or tittle of his word shall fall short of his promise." His sacred word, whatever may obstruct it; whoever may oppose it; shall be fulfilled to the very uttermost.

O powerful word! How astonishing is its efficacy? When this word was issued forth, a thousand worlds emerged out of nothing. And, should the mighty orders be repeated, a thousand more would spring into existence. By this word the vast system of created things is upheld, in immutable constancy: but, should it give command, or cease to exert its energy; the universal frame would be dissolved, and all Nature revert to her original Chaos. And this very word is pledged for the safety,

safety, the comfort, the happiness of the Godly. This inviolable, this Almighty word, speaks in all the promises of the Gospel.—How strangely infatuated are our souls, that we should value it so little! What infidels are we in fact, that we should depend upon it no more! Did it create, whatever has a being; and shall it not work faith, in our breasts? Do unnumbered worlds owe their support to this word; and shall it not be sufficient to buoy up our souls in troubles, or establish them in trials? Is it the life of the universe, and shall it be a dead letter to mankind?

If I wish to be heard, when I implore heavenly blessings; is not this privilege most clearly made over to my enjoyment, in that well known text, “Ask, and it shall be given you?*”—If I long for the eternal Comforter, to dwell in my heart, and sanctify my nature; have I not an apparent title to this high prerogative, conferred in that sweet assertive interrogation, “How much more shall your heavenly Father, give the Holy Spirit to those that ask him†?”—If I earnestly covet the inestimable treasures, that are comprised in the great IMMANUEL’s mediation; can I have a firmer claim to the noble portion, that is granted in that most precious Scripture, “Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out‡?”—What assurance, of being interested in these unspeakable mercies, would I desire? What form of conveyance; what deed of settlement; were it left to my own option, should I choose? Here is the word of a King; the King immortal and invisible; all whose declarations || are truth itself.—If a monarch bestow immunities

* Matth. vii. 7. † Luke xi. 13. ‡ John vi. 37.

|| ——— If these fail,

The pillar’d firmament is rottenness,
And earth’s basis built on stubble.

Milt. Comus.

immunities on a body of men, and confirm them by an authentic charter; no one controverts, no one questions their right to the Royal favours. And why should we suspect the validity of those glorious grants, which are made by the everlasting Sovereign of Nature; which he has also ratified by an oath, and sealed with the blood of his Son?—Corporations may be disfranchised, and charters revoked. Even mountains may be removed, and stars drop from their spheres. But a tenure, founded on the divine promise, is unalienably secure, is lasting, as eternity itself.

WE have endeavoured to spell out a syllable, of the eternal name, in the wonders of the sky. We have caught a glympse, of the Almighty's glory, from the lustre of innumerable stars. But, would we behold all his excellencies, pourtrayed in full perfection; and drawn to the very life; let us attentively consider the REDEEMER.—I observe, there are some parts of the firmament, in which the stars seem, as it were, to cluster. They are sown thicker, they lie closer, than usual; and strike the eye, with redoubled splendor. Like the jewels on a crown, they mingle their beams; and reflect a reciprocal increase of brilliancy, on each other.—And is there not such an assemblage, such a constellation of the divine honours, most amiably effulgent in the blessed Jesus?

DOES not infinite wisdom * shine, with surpassing brightness, in CHRIST? To the making of a world, there was no obstacle; but to the saving of man, there seemed to be unsurmountable bars. If the rebel is suffered to escape; where is the inflexible justice, which denounces "Death as the wages of sin?" If the offender is thoroughly pardoned;

* See the next note.

doned ; where is the inviolable veracity, which has solemnly declared, “ The soul that sinneth, shall die ? ” These awful attributes are set in terrible array ; and, like an impenetrable battalion, oppose the salvation of apostate mankind. Who can suggest a method, to absolve the traiterous race, and yet vindicate the honours of Almighty Sovereignty ? This is an intricacy, which the most exalted of finite intelligences are unable to clear.—But, behold the unsearchable secret revealed ! revealed in the wonderful redemption, accomplished by a dying Saviour ? So plainly revealed, that “ He who runs may read ; ” and even babes understand what minds of the deepest penetration could not contrive.—The Son of God, taking our nature, obeys the law, and undergoes death, in our stead. By this means, the threatened curse is executed, in all its rigour ; and free grace is exercised, in all its riches. Justice maintains its rights, and, with a steady hand, administers impartial vengeance ; while mercy dispenses her pardons, and welcomes the repentant criminal into its tenderest embraces. Hereby, the seemingly thwarting attributes are reconciled ; and the sinner is saved, not only in full consistence with the honour of the supreme perfections, but to the most illustrious manifestation of them all.

WHERE does the divine power § so signally exert itself, as in the cross of Christ, and in the conquests of grace ?—Our Lord, in his lowest state of humiliation, gained a more glorious victory ;

§ “ Christ, the wisdom of God, and the power of God.” 1 Cor. i. 24.—To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church (by the amazing contrivance, circumstances, and accomplishment, of its redemption) the deep, extensive, and (πολυποικίλος) greatly diversified wisdom of God. Eph. iii. 10.

tory; than when, through the dividing sea, and the waste howling wilderness, he “rode upon his chariots and horses of salvation.” When his hands were riveted, with irons, to the bloody tree; he disarmed death of its sting, and plucked the prey from the jaws of hell. Then, even then, while he was crucified in weakness, he vanquished the strong man, and subdued our most formidable enemies; even then, he spoiled principalities; triumphed over the powers of darkness; and led captivity captive. —And now he is exalted to his heavenly throne, with what a prevailing efficacy does his grace go forth, “conquering, and to conquer!” By this, the Slaves of Sin are rescued from their bondage, and restored to the Liberty of Righteousness. By this depraved wretches, whose appetites were sensual, and their disposition devilish; are not only renewed, but renewed after the image of God, and made partakers of a Divine Nature. Millions, millions of lost creatures are snatched, by the interposition of grace, like brands from the burning; and, translated into everlasting mansions, shine brighter than the stars, shine bright as the Sun, in the kingdom of their father.

WOULD you see a more compleat display of the divine Purity, than the unspotted firmament; the spangles of heaven; or the golden fountain of day? Contemplate the same sacred Being. He is the brightness of his father’s glory, and the express image of his person. In his immaculate nature; in his heavenly tempers; in his most holy life; the moral Perfections of the Deity are represented, to the highest advantage §. —Hark! how Mercy, with her charming voice, speaks in all He utters. —
See!

§ In this sense, that saying of our Lord is eminently true, “He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father.” John xiv. 9.

See ! how benevolence pours her choicest stores, in all he does.—Did ever compassion look so amiably soft, as in those pitying tears ; which swelled his eyes, and trickled down his cheek, to bedew the rancour of his inveterate enemies ?—Was it possible for patience to assume a form so lovely ; as that sweetly-winning conduct, which bore the contradiction of sinners : which intreated the obstinate, to be reconciled ; besought the guilty, not to die ?—In a word ; from other things, we may collect some scattered rays of JEHOVAH's glory ; but in CHRIST they are all united ; and beam forth, with the strongest radiance, the most delightful effulgence. “ Out of Sion, and in Sion's great Redeemer, hath GOD appeared in perfect beauty.”

SEARCH then, my soul, above all other pursuits, search the records of redeeming love. Let these be the principal objects of thy study. Here, employ thyself, with the most unwearied assiduity.—In these are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge ||. Such wisdom ; as the very angels, are intensely desirous, to become more intimately acquainted with : Such knowledge ; as qualifies the possessor,

|| Colof. ii. 3—Not a mean degree, but a treasure ; not one treasure, but many ; not many only, but all treasures, of true wisdom, and saving knowledge ; are in Christ, and his glorious gospel.—The superior excellency of those treasures seems to be finely intimated, in that other expression—*αποκρυφει*—hid ; or laid up, with the utmost care, and in a place of the greatest safety. Not left at all adventures, to be stumbled upon, by every giddy wanderer ; or to fall into the arms of the yawning fluggard : but, like jewels of the brightest lustre, or riches of the highest value, kept in store to adorn and reward the diligent searcher.

§ This, I believe, is the import of the apostle's language, though it is not a literal translation of —
Εις α επιθυμουν αγγελοι παρακυνψαι. Pet. i. 12.—I
never

possessor, if not for offices of dignity on earth, yet for the most honourable advancements in the kingdom of heaven. Disunited from which, all application is but elaborate impertinence; and all science no better than pompous ignorance.—These also contain the faultless model of duty, and the noblest motives to obedience. Nothing so powerful, to work a lively faith, and a joyful hope; as an attentive consideration of our Lord's unutterable merits. Nothing so sovereign, to antidote the pestilential influence of the world, and deliver our affections from a slavery to ignoble objects; as an habitual remembrance of his extreme agonies. The genuine, the ever-fruitful source of all morality, is the unfeigned love of CHRIST; and the cross, the cross, is the appointed ¶ Altar, from which we may fetch a coal §, to inkindle this sacred fire.

BEHOLD,

never had so lively an apprehension of the beautiful significancy of the last word, as when I have attended a dissection of some part of the animal body. In order to discern the minutiae of the admirable frame; the latent wonders of art and mechanism; the eye is so sharpened, and its application so intensely bended, as gives a very just experimental comment on that expressive phrase, παρανταί—With such earnest attention, is the everlasting gospel contemplated, by the Angelic orders! How much more, if it were possible, does it deserve the devout and incessant consideration of human minds? Since by them, it is not only to be speculated, as a bright and ravishing display of the divine attributes; but to be applied to their fallen nature, as a most benign scheme of recovering grace; as the sure and only method of obtaining life and immortality.

¶ And I, says our Lord, if I be lifted up from the earth, and extended on the cross, will draw all men unto me; will give such a rich and transcendent display of my love, as shall constitute the most powerful and prevailing attractive of theirs. John xii. 32.

§ Alluding to Isaiah vi. 6.

BEHOLD, therefore, the man; the matchless and stupendous man; who gave us a pattern of the most exalted virtue, and was himself the mirror of every divine perfection. Examine the memoirs of his exemplary conversation. Contemplate the choir of graces, which were associated in his mind, and shed the highest lustre on all his actions; familiarize to thy thoughts his heavenly discourses, and enter into the very spirit of his refined doctrines: get the one transfused into thy breast, the other transcribed in thy life.—Follow him to the last scene of the most innocent and useful course, that was ever passed on earth. Follow him to Calvary's horrid eminence; to Calvary's fatal catastrophe. Be thy most constant attention fixed, on that lovely and sorrowful spectacle. Behold the spotless victim, nailed to the tree, and stabbed to the heart. Hear him pouring out Prayers for his Murderers; before he poured out his soul, for transgressors. See the wounds that stream with forgiveness, and bleed Balm for a distempered world. O! see the justice of the Almighty and his goodness; his mercy and his vengeance; all his tremendous and gracious attributes manifested: manifested with inexpressible splendor, in that most ignominious, and yet grandest, of transactions.

SINCE God is so inconceivably great, as these his marvellous works declare;

Since the great Sov'reign sends ten thousand
worlds,
To tell us, He resides above them all,
In glory's unapproachable recess ¶;

What

¶ For this quotation, and several valuable hints, I acknowledge myself indebted to those beautiful and sublime poems, intituled Night-Thoughts.—Of which I shall

What an honourable, as well as advantageous employ, is prayer? By prayer, we have access to that most mighty potentate; whose sceptre sways universal nature, and whose rich regalia fill the skies with lustre. Prayer places us in his presence-chamber; while "the blood of sprinkling," procures us a gracious audience.— Shall I then blush to be found prostrate, before the throne of grace? Shall I be ashamed to have it known; that I offer up social supplications in the family, or am conscientious in observing my private retirements? Rather, let me glory in this unspeakable privilege. Let me reckon it the noblest posture, to fall low on my knees before his footstool; and the highest honour, to enjoy communion with his most exalted majesty.— Incomparably more noble, than to sit in person, on the triumphal chariot; or to stand, in effigy, amidst the temple of worthies.

How inestimable, in such a view, is that promise; which so often occurs in the prophetic writings, and is the crowning benefit of the new covenant, I will be thy God ¶———Will this supremely excellent, and Almighty Being vouchsafe to be my portion? To settle upon a poor sinner, not the heritage of a county; nor the possession of the whole earth; but his own ever-blessed Self?

May

I shall only say, That I receive fresh pleasure, and richer improvement, from every renewed perusal. And, I think, I shall have reason to bless the indulgent Benefactor of all Wisdom for those instructive and animating compositions, even in my last moments. Than which, nothing can more emphatically speak their very superior excellency, nor give a more solid satisfaction to their worthy author. — Happy should I think myself, if these little sketches of contemplative devotion might be honoured with the most inferior degree, of the same success; and receive a testimony, not from the voice of fame, but from the dying lips of some edified Christian.

¶ Heb. viii. 10.

May I then, through his free condescending grace, and the unknown merits of his son, look upon all these infinitely noble attributes as my treasure? May I regard the wisdom, which superintends such a multitude of worlds, as my guide; the power, which produced, and preserves them in existence, as my guard; the goodness, which, by an endless communication of favours, renders them all so many habitations of happiness, as my exceeding great reward? — What a fund of felicity is included in such a blessing? How often does the Israelitish prince exult in the assurance, that this unutterable and boundless good is his own? Interested in this, he bids defiance to every evil, that can be dreaded; and rests in certain expectation of every blessing, that can be desired. “The LORD is my light, and my salvation; whom then shall I fear?” “The LORD,” with an air of exultation, he repeats both his assiance and his challenge, “is the strength of my life: of whom then shall I be afraid *?” Nothing so effectual, as this appropriating faith to inspire a dignity of mind, superior to transitory trifles; or to create a calmness of temper, unalarmed by vulgar fears, unappalled by death itself. — The Lord is my shepherd, says the same truly gallant and heroic personage: therefore shall I lack nothing †. How is it possible, he should suffer want, who has the All-sufficient Fulness for his supply? So long as unerring wisdom is capable of contriving the means; and irresistible power is able to execute them; such a one cannot fail of being safe and happy; whether he continue amidst the vicissitudes of time, or depart into the unchangeable eternity.

HERE, let us stand a moment, and contemplate this great God, together with ourselves, in a relative

* Psalm xxvii. 1.

† Psalm xxiii. 1.

relative view.—If we reflect on the works of material nature, their number incomprehensible, and their extent unmeasurable: each of them apart, so admirably framed; the connexions of the whole, so exquisitely regulated; and all derived, from one and the same glorious agent.—If we recollect the far more noble accomplishments of elegant taste, and discerning judgment; of refined passions, and exalted sentiments; which are to be found, among the several orders of understanding beings; and all of them flowing, in rich emanations, from the one sole fountain of intellectual light.—If we farther consider this author of material beauty, and moral excellency, as a Guardian, a Governor, and Benefactor to all his creatures; supporting their beings, and protecting their persons, by an ever-watchful providence; presiding over their affairs, and causing all events to terminate in the most extensive good; heaping, with unremitting liberality, his benefits upon every capable object, and making the whole circle of existence a seminary of happiness.—Is it possible for the human heart, under such captivating views, to be indifferent towards this ever-blessed original of all good? Can any be so immersed in stupidity, as to say unto the Almighty—in the language of an irreligious temper, and licentious life, to say? “Depart from us; we implore not thy favour; nor desire the knowledge of thy ways.”—Wonder, O heavens! be amazed, O earth! and let all the inhabitants of both, join their astonishment, at this unparalleled complication of disingenuous, ungrateful, and destructive perverseness!

If we consider our own imperfect state; frail in our bodies; enfeebled in our minds; in every part of our constitution, and in all the occurrences of life, “like a tottering wall, or a broken hedge;” if we survey our indigent state; without

holiness;

Q

holiness; without happiness; our possession of present conveniencies, entirely dependent on God's sovereign pleasure; yea, forfeited, justly forfeited, with every future hope, by a thousand aggravated iniquities—If we add the various disasters of our condition; agitated by tumultuous passions; oppressed with dispiriting fears; held in suspense by a variety of perplexing * cares; liable to pains, and exposed to troubles; troubles, from every quarter; troubles, of every kind;—Can we, amidst so many wants, under such deplorable infirmities, and subject to such disastrous accidents, —can we be unconcerned, whether God's omnipotent hand, and uncontrollable will, be against us, or for us? Imagination itself shudders at the thought!—Can we rest satisfied, without a well-grounded persuasion, that we are reconciled to this supreme Lord, and the objects of his unchangeable goodness?—If there be an abandoned wretch,

* All that are conversant with the original language of the New Testament are sufficiently apprised that this is the significancy of that important dissuasive, urged by our Lord; *μη μεριμνᾶτε*, Mat. vi. 25.—I beg leave, for the sake of the unlearned reader, to observe; That our translation, though for the most part faithful and excellent, has here slipped into a very great impropriety, and misrepresented our divine Master's meaning. "Take no thought for your body," is not only not the true sense, but the very reverse of the scriptural doctrine. We are required to take a prudent and moderate thought, for the necessities of life. The sluggard, who neglects this decent precaution, is severely reprimanded; is sent to one of the meanest animals, to blush for his folly, and learn discretion from her conduct, Prov. vi. 6. Our Saviour's precept, and the exact sense of his expression, is, Take no anxious thought; indulge no perplexing care; no such care, as may argue an unreasonable distrust of Providence; or may rend and tear your minds with distressing, with pernicious solicitude.

wretch, whose apprehensions are so fatally blinded; who is so utterly lost to all sense of his duty, and of his interest: let me bewail his misery; while I abhor his impiety. Bewail his misery; though popularity, with her choicest laurels, adorn his brow; though affluence, with her richest delicacies, load his table; though half a nation, or half a world, conspire to call him happy.

MAY I, by a believing application, solace myself in this everlasting source of love, perfection, and joy! Grant me this request, and I ask no more.—Only, that I may expect, not with a reluctant anxiety, but with a ready cheerfulness, the arrival of that important hour; when this veil of flesh shall drop, and all the shadows of mortality flee away. When I shall no longer complain of obscure knowledge; languid affections; and imperfect fruition.—But, shall see the uncreated and immortal Majesty; see him, not in this distant and unaffecting method, of reasoning from his works; but with the most clear and direct intuition of the mind.—When I shall love him, not with a cold and contracted spirit; but with the most lively and enlarged emotions of gratitude.—When I shall abundantly enjoy the light of his countenance; and be united, intimately, inseparably, united to his all-glorious Godhead.—Take, ye ambitious, un-envied and un-opposed, take to yourselves the toys of state. May I be enabled to rejoice in this blessed hope; and to triumph in that amiable, that adorable, that delightful name, the LORD MY GOD! And I shall scarce bestow a thought, on the splendid pageantry of the world; unless it be to despise its empty pomp, and to pity its deluded admirers.

ALL these bodies, though immense in their size, and almost infinite in their multitude, are obedient to the divine command. The God of wisdom

“tellet their numbers,” and is intimately acquainted with their various properties. The God of power “callet them all by their names,” and assigns them whatsoever office he pleases.—He marshals all the starry legions with infinitely greater ease, and nicer order, than the most expert General arranges his disciplined troops. He appoints their posts; he marks their route; he fixes the time for their return. The posts, which he appoints, they occupy, without fail. In the route, which he settles, they persevere, without the least deviation. And are punctual to the instant*, which he fixes for their return.—He has given them a law, which, through a long revolution of ages, shall not be broken; unless his sovereign Will interposes for its repeal. Then indeed their motions are controuled; their action is suspended; and their influence sealed up.—The sun at his creation received a command to travel through the heavens. Since which, he has constantly performed the great circuit; and “rejoiced as a giant, to run his race.” But, when it was requisite to subserve the purposes of divine love, the orders are countermanded; the flaming courier stops his career; “stands still in Gibeon †;” and, for the convenience of the chosen people, holds back the falling day.—The moon too was dispatched with a charge, never to intermit her revolving

* “The planets, and all the innumerable host of heavenly bodies, perform their courses and revolutions, with so much certainty and exactness, as never once to fail; but, for almost 6000 years, come constantly about to the same period, in the hundredth part of a minute.” Stackhouse’s Hist. Bib.

† This is spoken in conformity to the Scripture language, and according to the common notion. With respect to the power which effected the alteration; it is much the same thing, and alike miraculous; whether the sun, or the earth, be supposed to move.

revolving motion, till day and night come to an end. But, when the children of Providence were to be favoured with an uncommon continuation of light, she halts in her march ; makes a solemn pause in the valley of Ajalon* ; and delays to bring on her attendant train of shadows.—When the enemies of the Lord are to be discomfited, the stars likewise are levied into the service ; the stars are armed, and take the field ; “ the stars in their courses, fought against Sisera ¶.”

Q 3

So

* Josh. x. 12, 13.—The prophet Habakkuk, according to his lofty manner, celebrates this event ; and points out in a very poetical diction, the design of so surprising a miracle.—“ The sun and moon stood still in their habitations :” In the light, the long-continued and miraculous light, thy arrows, edged with destruction, walked on their awful errand ; in the clear shining of the day, protracted for this very purpose, thy glittering spear, launched by the people, but guided by thy hand, sprung to its prey. Hab. iii. 11.

¶ Judges v. 20. The scripture phrase ‘ fought against’ will, I hope, be a proper warrant for every expression, I have used on this occasion.—The passage is generally supposed to signify, that some very dreadful meteors (which the stars were thought to influence) ; such as fierce flashes of lightning ; impetuous showers of rain ; and rapid storms of hail ; were employed by the Almighty to terrify, annoy, and overthrow the enemies of Israel. If so, there cannot be a more clear and lively paraphrase on the text, than those fine lines of a Jewish writer—“ His severe wrath shall he sharpen for a sword ; and the world shall fight with him against the ungodly. Then shall the right aiming thunderbolts go abroad ; and from the clouds as from a well-drawn bow shall they fly to the mark. And hail-stones, full of wrath, shall be cast as out of a stone bow ; and the water of the sea shall rage against them ; and the floods (as was the case with the river Kishon) shall cruelly drown them. Yea a mighty wind shall stand up against them ; and, like a storm shall blow them away.” Wisdom v. 20, 21, 22, 23.

So dutiful is material nature ; so obsequious, in all her forms, to her Creator's pleasure !—The bel-
lowing thunders listen to his voice ; and the vollied
lightnings observe the direction of his eye. The
flying storm, and impetuous whirlwind, wear his
yoke. The raging waves revere his nod : they shake
the earth, and dash the skies ; yet never offer to pass
the bounds, which he has set.—Even the planetary
spheres ; though vastly larger than this wide ex-
tended earth ; are, in his hand, as clay in the hands
of the potter : though, far swifter than the northern
blast, they sweep the long tracts of æther ; yet are
they guided by his reins, and precisely execute what-
ever he enjoins.—All those enormous globes of cen-
tral fire, which beam through the boundless azure ;
in comparison of which, an army of planets were like
a swarm of summer insects ; those, even those, are
conformable to his will, as the melting wax to the
impressed seal.—And if all, ALL is obedient
throughout the whole ascent of things, shall man
be the only rebel ? Shall our unruly appetites re-
ject the government of Almighty goodness ? Shall
these headstrong passions break loose from divine
restraint ; and run wild, in exorbitant sallies, after
their own imaginations ?

O MY soul, be stung with remorse, and over-
whelmed with confusion, at such a thought ! Is
it not a righteous thing, that the blessed God
should sway the sceptre, with the most absolute
authority, over all the creatures, which his power
has formed ? Especially over those creatures ; whom
his distinguishing favour has endued with the no-
ble principle of reason, and made capable of a
blissful immortality ! Sure, if all the ranks of in-
animate existence submit to their Maker's decree
by the necessity of their nature ; this more excel-
lent race of beings, should pay their equal ho-
mage,

mage, by the willing compliance of their affections*.—Come then, all ye faculties of my mind; come, all ye powers of my body; give up yourselves, without a moment's delay, without the least reserve, to his governance. Stand like dutiful servants, at his footstool; in an everlasting readiness, to do whatsoever he requires: to be whatsoever he appoints: To further, with united Efforts, the purposes of his Glory in this earthly scene: or else to separate, without reluctance, at his summons; the one, to sleep in the silent dust; the other, to advance his honour, in some remoter colony of his kingdom.—Thus, may I join with all the works of the LORD, in all Places of his dominion, to recognize his universal supremacy; and

Q 4

* This argument, I acknowledge, is not absolutely conclusive: But it is popular and striking. Nor can I think myself obliged, in such a work, where fancy bears a considerable sway to proceed always with the caution and exactness of a disputer in the schools. If there be some appearance of analogy, between the fact and the inference, it seems sufficient for my purpose; though the deduction should not be necessary, or strictly syllogistical.—One of the apostolic fathers, has an affecting and truly sublime paragraph, which runs intirely in this form; *Ἡλιος τε καὶ σελήνη, ἀστέρων τε χοροί, κατὰ τὴν διαταγὴν αὐτῶ ἐν ὁμονοίᾳ διχὰ πάσης παρεκβάσεως, ἐξελίσσουσιν τῆς ἐπιταγμένης αὐτοῖς ὁρίσεως.* The sun, the moon, and the starry choir, without the least deviation and with the utmost harmony, perform the revolutions appointed them by the supreme decree. From which Remark, and abundance of other similar instances, observable in the œconomy of nature; he exhorts christians, to a cordial unanimity among themselves, and a dutiful obedience to God. Vid. Clem Roman. 1. Ep. ad Corinth. Sect. 20—See also a beautiful Ode in Dr. Watts's Lyric Poems, intituled, The Comparison and Complaint, which turns entirely upon this very thought.

and proclaim him Sovereign of souls, as well as ruler of worlds.

AT my first coming abroad, all those luminaries were totally eclipsed, by the overpowering lustre of the sun. They were all placed in the very same stations; and played the same sprightly Beams; yet, not one was seen. As the Daylight wore away, and the sober shades advanced; Hesperus, that leads the starry train, disclosed his radiant forehead, and caught my eye. While I stood gazing, on his bright and beautiful aspect, others peeped thro' the blue curtains. Scarce had I turned to observe, these fresh emanations of splendor; but others dropt the veil; others stole into view, when lo! faster and more numerous, multitudes sprung from obscurity; they poured, in shining troops, and in sweet confusion, over all the cærulean plain; till the firmament seemed, like one vast constellation; and a flood of glory burst from all the skies.

Is not such the rise, and such the progress, of a true conversion; in the prejudiced infidel, or inattentive sinner? In the period of his vainer years, a thousand interesting truths lay utterly undiscovered; a thousand momentous concerns were intirely disregarded. But, when divine grace dissipates the delusive glitter, which dazzled his understanding, or beguiled his affections; then he begins to discern, dimly to discern, the things that belong to his peace. Some powerful admonition of scripture, darts conviction into his mind; as the rays of a star pierce the gloom of night. Then, perhaps, another awful or chearing text flings terror, or diffuses comfort; a threatening alarms his fears, or a promise awakens his hopes. This possibly, is succeeded by some very impressive dispensation of Providence; or improved by some edifying, and instructive conversation. All which is fastened,

fastened, as to its continuance; and enlarged, as to its influence; by a diligent study of the sacred word. By this means, new truths continually pour their evidence; new scenes of refined and exalted, but hitherto unknown delight, address him with their attractives. New desires take wing; new pursuits are set on foot. A new set of tempers actuates his heart; a new habit of conversation regulates his life. Old things are passed away; and, "He, that was sometime darkness, is now light, and life, and joy in the LORD."

THE more attentively I view the crystal concave, the greater number of luminaries I discern. Abundance of minuter lights, that lay concealed from a superficial notice, are visible on a closer examination; especially in those tracts of the sky, which are called the galaxy; and are distinguishable, by a sort of milky path. There, they are crouded rather than disseminated. The region seems to be all on a blaze, with their blended rays. They shine thick as dew drops, on the face of the morning.—Besides this vast profusion, which the prying eye discovers; were I to make my survey from any other part of the globe, that lies nearer the Southern Pole; I should behold a new choir of starry bodies, which have never appeared in our hemisphere:—And were I, either here or there, to view the firmament with the virtuoso's glass; I should find a prodigious multitude of flaming orbs, that, immersed in depths of Æther, escape the keenest unassisted sight*.—And yet in these

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* Come forth, O man, yon azure Round survey,
And view those lamps, which yield eternal Day:
Bring forth thy glasses: Clear thy wond'ring eyes:
Millions beyond the former millions rise:
Look farther:—Millions more blaze from remoter
Skies.

See an ingenious poem intituled, THE UNIVERSE.

these various situations; even with the aid of the telescopic tube, I should not be able to descry the half, perhaps not a thousandth part, of those illustrious bodies, which the vast expansive Heavens contain.*—So, the more diligently I pursue my search, into those oracles of eternal truth, the scriptures; I perceive a wider, a deeper, an ever increasing fund of spiritual treasures. I perceive the diviner strokes of wisdom, and the richer displays of goodness; the more transcendent excellency of the Messiah, and a more deplorable vileness in fallen man; a more immaculate purity in God's law; and more precious Privileges in his gospel. And yet, after a course of study, ever so assiduous; ever so prolonged; I should have reason to own myself a mere babe in heavenly knowledge; or, at most, but a puerile proficient in the school of CHRIST.

AFTER all my most accurate inspection, those starry orbs appear but as glittering Points; and even the planets, though so much nearer our earthly mansion, seem not to exceed the size of flaming bullets. If then, we have such imperfect apprehensions, of visible and material things; how much more scanty and inadequate must be our notions, of invisible and immortal objects!—We behold

* How noble, considered in this View, are the Celebrations of the Divine Majesty, which frequently occur in the sacred Writings! "It is the LORD that made the Heavens." Psal. xcvi. 5.—What a prodigious Dignity does such a Sense of things give, to that devout Ascription of Praise! "Thou, even Thou, art LORD alone; Thou hast made Heaven, the Heaven of Heavens, with all their Host." Nehem. xi. 6.—And how inimitably sublime is that beautiful Climax, in the inspired Hymn! "Praise HIM Sun and Moon; Praise Him, all ye Stars of Light: Praise Him, ye Heaven of Heavens." Psal. cxlviii. 3, 4.

behold the stars; and, though every one is incomparably bigger than this whole earth; yet they dwindle, upon our survey, into the most diminutive Forms. Thus we see by faith the glories of the blessed JESUS; the atoning efficacy of his death; the justifying merit of his righteousness; and the joys, which are reserved for the godly. But alas! even our most exalted ideas are vastly below the truth: As much below the truth; as the report, which our eyes make of those celestial edifices, is inferior to their real Grandeur.—Should we take in all the magnifying assistances, which art has contrived; those luminous bodies would elude our Skill, and seem as small as ever. Should an inhabitant of earth travel towards the cope of Heaven; and be carried forwards in his aerial journey, more than a hundred and sixty millions of miles*; even in that advanced situation, those oceans of flame would look no larger than radiant specks.—In like manner, conceive ever so magnificently of the Redeemer's honours; and of the bliss, which he has purchased for his people; yet you will fall short. Raise your imagination higher; stretch your invention wider; give them all the scope, that a soaring and excursive Fancy can take; still your conceptions will be extremely disproportionate, to their genuine perfection.—Vast are the bodies, which roll in the expanse of heaven; vaster far are those fields of Æther, through which they run their endless rounds; but the excellency of JESUS, and the happiness
laid

* This, incredible as it may seem, is not a mere Supposition; but a real Fact. For, about the Tenth of December, we are above 160,000,000 of Miles nearer the Northern Parts of the Sky, than we were at the Tenth of June. And yet, with regard to the Stars situate in that Quarter, we perceive no Change in their Aspect, nor any Augmentation of their Magnitude.

laid up for his servants, are greater than either; than both; than all. An inspired writer calls one, "The unsearchable riches of CHRIST;" and styles the other, "an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory."

IF those stars are so many inexhaustible magazines of fire, and immense reservoirs of light; there is no reason to doubt, but they have some very grand uses, suitable to the magnificence of their nature. To specify, or explain, the particular Purposes they answer; is altogether impossible, in our present state of distance and ignorance. This, however, we may clearly discern; that they are disposed in such a manner, as is most pleasing, and serviceable, to mankind.—They are not placed at such an infinite Remove, as to lie beyond our sight; neither are they brought so near our abode, as to annoy us with their beams. We see them shine on every side; and the deep azure, that serves them as a ground, heightens their splendor. But, their influence is gentle, and their rays are destitute of heat. So that we are favoured with the view of a multitude of fiery globes; without any risque, either to the coolness of our night, or the quiet of our repose.—Who can sufficiently admire that immense benignity; which, on our account, strews the earth with Blessings of every Kind; and vouchsafes to make the very heavens subservient to our Delight?

BUT, it is not solely to adorn the roof of our palace, with costly gildings; that GOD commands the celestial luminaries, to glitter through the gloom. We also reap considerable benefits, from their ministry.—They divide our Time, and fix its solemn periods. They settle the order of our works; and are, according to the destination mentioned in sacred writ, "for signs, and for seasons; for days, and for years." The returns
of

of heat and cold alone would have been too precarious a rule. But these radiant bodies; by the variation, and also by the regularity, of their motions; afford a method of calculating, absolutely certain, and sufficiently obvious. By this, the Farmer is instructed, when to commit his grain to the furrows, and how to conduct the operations of husbandry. By this, the sailor knows when to proceed on his voyage, with least peril; and how to carry on the business of navigation, with most success.

WHY should not the Christian, the probationer for eternity, learn from the same monitors, to number, for nobler purposes, his days; and duly to transact the grand, grand affairs, of his final salvation? Since God has appointed so many bright measures of our time, to determine its larger periods, and to minute down its ordinary stages; surely, this most strongly inculcates its value, and should powerfully prompt us to improve it.—Behold! the supreme Lord marks the progress of our life, in that most conspicuous kalendar above. And does not such an ordination tell us, in the most emphatical language, that it is given for use, not for waste? That no portion of it is delivered, but under a strict account; that all of it is entered, as it passes, in the divine register; and, therefore, that the stewards of such a talent, are to expect a future reckoning?——Behold! the very heavens are bidden to be the accomptants of our years, and months, and days. O! may this induce us to manage them, with a vigilant frugality; to part with them, as misers with their hoarded treasure, warily and circumspectly; and, if possible, as merchants with their rich commodities, not without their equivalent, either in personal improvement, or social usefulness!

How

How bright the starry diamonds shine! The ambition of eastern monarchs could imagine no distinction, more noble and sublime, than that of being likened to those beaming orbs †.—They form night's richest dress; and sparkle upon her sable robe, like jewels of the finest lustre. Like jewels! I wrong their character. The lucid stone has no brilliancy; quenched is the flame even of the golden topaz; compared with those glowing decorations of heaven.—How widely are their radiant honours diffused! No nation so remote, but sees their beauty, and rejoices in their usefulness. They have been admired by all preceding generations; and every rising age will gaze on their charms, with renewed delight.——

How animating, then, is that promise, made to the faithful ministers of the gospel! “They that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever ‡.” Is not this a most winning encouragement, “to spend and be spent,” in the service of souls? Methink, the stars beckon, as they twinkle. Methinks, they shew me their splendour, on purpose to awaken my alacrity, in the race set before me; on purpose to enliven my activity, in the work that is given me to do.—If honour has any charms; if true glory, the glory which cometh from God, is any attractive; there cannot be a more powerful incitement, to exercise all assiduity in my holy vocation. Therefore, when zeal becomes languid; let me have recourse to these lamps of heaven; and rekindle its ardor, at their inextinguishable fires.

OF the Polar Star, it is observable; that, while other luminaries alter their situation, this seems
invariably

† Numb. xxiv. 17. Dan. viii. 10.

‡ Dan. xii. 3.

invariably fixed *. While other luminaries, now, mount the battlements of heaven, and appear upon duty; now, retire beneath the horizon, and resign, to a fresh set, the watches of the night; this never departs from its station. This, in every season, maintains an uniform position; and is always to be found, in the same tract of the northern sky.——How often has this beamed bright intelligence on the sailor; and conducted the keel to its desired haven! In early ages, those that went down to the sea in ships, and occupied their business in great waters, had scarce any other sure guide for their wandering vessel. This therefore they viewed, with the most solicitous attention. By this, they formed their observations, and regulated their voyage. When this was obscured by clouds, or enveloped in mists; the trembling mariner was bewildered, on the watery waste. His thoughts fluctuated, as much as the floating surge; and he knew not where he was advanced, or whither he should steer. But, when this auspicious star broke through the gloom; it dissipated the anxiety of his mind, and cleared up his dubious passage. He re-assumed, with alacrity, the management of the helm; and was able to shape his course, with some tolerable degree of satisfaction and certainty.

SUCH, only much clearer in its light, and much surer in its direction, is the holy word of God, to those myriads of intellectual Beings, who are bound for the eternal shores: and, embarked in a vessel of frail flesh, are to pass the waves of this perilous world. In all difficulties, these

* I speak in conformity to the appearance of the object. For, though this remarkable star revolves round the pole, its motion is so slow, and the circle it describes so small; as render both the revolution, and change of situation, hardly perceivable.

these sacred pages shed an encouraging ray; in all uncertainties, they suggest the right determination, and point out a proper procedure. And, what is still a more inestimable advantage; they, like the star which conducted the eastern Sages, make plain our way to the Redeemer. They display his unspeakable merits; discover the method of being interested in his atonement; and lead the weary soul, tossed by troubles, and shattered by temptations, to that only harbour of peaceful repose.— Let us, therefore, attend to this unerring directory, with the same constancy of regard, as the seafaring man observes his compass. Let us become as thoroughly acquainted with this sacred chart, as the pilot is with every trusty mark, that gives notice of a lurking rock; and with every open road, that yields a safe passage into the port. Above all, let us commit ourselves to this infallible guidance, with the same implicit resignation; let us conform to its divine precepts, with the same sedulous care; as the children of Israel, when, sojourning in the trackless desert, followed the pillar of fire, and the motions of the miraculous cloud.— So, will it introduce us, not into an earthly Canaan, flowing with milk and honey; but into an immortal paradise, where is the fulness of joy, and where are pleasures for evermore. It will introduce us into those happy, happy regions, where our sun shall no more go down, nor our moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be our everlasting light, and the days of our mourning, together with the fatigues of our pilgrimage, shall be ended ¶.

I PERCEIVE a great variety, in the size and splendor of those gems of heaven. Some are of the first magnitude; others, of an inferior order. Some glow with intense flames; others glimmer with fainter beams. Yet, all are beautiful; all have

have their peculiar lustre, and distinct use; all tend, in their different degrees, to enamel the cope of heaven, and embroider the robe of night.—This circumstance is remarked by an author, whose sentiments are a source of wisdom, and the very standard of truth. “One star, says the apostle of the Gentiles, differeth from another star in glory; So also is the resurrection of the dead.”

IN the world above, are various degrees of happiness, various seats of honour. Some will rise to more illustrious distinctions, and richer joys*. Some, like vessels of ample capacity, will admit more copious accessions of light and excellence. And yet, there will be no want, no deficiency, in any; but a fulness both of divine satisfactions, and personal perfection. Each will enjoy all the good; and be adorned with all the glory; that his heart can wish, or his condition receive.—None will know what it is to envy. Not the least malevolence; not the least selfishness; but everlasting friendship prevails, and a mutual complacency in each other's delight. Love, cordial love, will give every particular saint a participation of all the fruitions†; that are diffused thro' the whole assembly of the blessed.—None will eclipse, but rather reflect light upon, another. A sweet interchange of rays subsist; all enlightened by the great fountain, and all enlightening one another. By which reciprocal communication of pleasure and amity, each will be continually receiving from; each incessantly adding to; the general felicity.

HAPPY,

* 1 Cor. xv. 41, 42. The great Mr. Mede prefers the sense here given, and the learned Dr. Hammond admits it, into his paraphrase. Whose joint authority though far from excluding any other, yet is a sufficient warrant for this application of the words.

† Tolle invidiam, & tuum est quod habeo: Tolle invidiam, & meum est quod habes. Augustine.

HAPPY, supremely happy they, who obtain the most humble portion in the celestial mansions. Better to be a door-keeper in those "Ivory palaces *," than to fill the most gorgeous throne on earth. The very lowest place at God's right-hand is distinguished honour, and consummate delight.—O! that we may anticipate something of that blissful state, while we remain in our banishment below! May we, by rejoicing in the superior prosperity of another, make it our own! And, provided the general result is harmony, be content, be pleased, with whatsoever part is assigned to our share, in the universal choir of affairs.

WHILE I am considering the heavenly bodies, I must not intirely forget those fundamental laws of our modern astronomy, projection, and attraction. One of which is the all-combining cement, the other is the over-operative spring, of the mighty Frame.—In the beginning, the all-creating Fiat impressed a proper degree of motion, on each of those whirling orbs. Which, if not controuled, would have carried them on, in strait lines; and to endless lengths; till they were even lost, in the abyss of space. But, the gravitating property, being added to the projectile force, determined their courses to a circular & form; and obliged the reluctant

* Psalm. xlv. 8.

§ I am aware, the planetary orbits are not strictly circular, but rather elliptical: However, as they are but a small remove from the perfectly rotund figure, and partake of it incomparably more than the trajectories of the comets; I choose to represent the thing in this view. Especially, because the notion of a circle is so much more intelligible to the generality of readers, than that of an ellipsis; and because I laid it down for a rule, not to admit any such abstruse sentiment or barbarous expression, as should demand a painful

luculent rovers, to perform their destined rounds.— Were either of those causes to suspend their action, all the harmoniously moving spheres would degenerate into torpid masses; and falling into the central fire be burnt to ashes: Or, else, would exorbitate into wild confusion; and each, by the rapidity of its whirl, be dissipated into atoms. But, the impulsives and attractive energy, being most nicely attuned to each other; and, under the immediate operation of the Almighty, exerting themselves in perpetual concert; the various globes run their radiant races, without the least interruption or deviation. So as to create the alternate changes, of day and night; and distribute the useful vicissitudes, of succeeding seasons. So as to answer all the great ends of a gracious providence; and procure every comfortable convenience, for universal nature.

Does not this constitution of the material very naturally lead the thoughts, to those grand principles of the moral and devotional world, faith and love?—These are often celebrated by the inspired apostle, as a comprehensive summary of the gospel*. These inspirit the breast, and regulate the progress, of each private Christian. These unite the whole congregation of the faithful to God, and one another: To God, the great centre, in the bonds of gratitude and duty; to one another, by a reciprocal

painful attention, instead of raising an agreeable idea. For which reason, I have avoided technical terms; have taken no notice of Jupiter's satellites, or Saturn's ring; have not so much as mentioned the names of the planets, nor attempted to wade into any depths of the science; lest, to those that have had no opportunity of using the telescope, or of acquainting themselves with a system of astronomy, I should propound riddles, rather than entertaining and edifying truths.

* Col. i. 4. Philem. ver. 5.

reciprocal intercourse of brotherly affections, and friendly offices. — If you ask, Why it is impossible for the true believer, to live at all adventures? to stagnate, in a listless inactivity; or to indulge the extravagant excursions, of lawless inclinations? — It is owing to “his faith, working by love §.” He verily trusts, that Christ has sustained the infamy, and endured the torment, due to his sins. He firmly relies on that divine propitiation, for the pardon of all his guilt; and humbly expects everlasting salvation, as the purchase of his Saviour’s merits. This produces such a set of grateful sentiments, and such a spirit of unfeigned thankfulness, as animate his whole behaviour. He cannot run to excess of riot; because love to his adorable Redeemer, like a strong but filken curb, sweetly restrains him. He cannot, he cannot be lulled into lethargic indolence: because love to the same infinite benefactor like a pungent, but endearing spur, pleasingly excites him. — In a word; Faith supplies the powerful impulse, while love gives the determining bias; and leads the willing feet, through the whole circle of God’s commandments. By the united efficacy of these heavenly graces, the Christian conduct is preserved in the uniformity and beauty of holiness; as by the blended power of those Newtonian principles, the solar system revolves, in a steady and magnificent regularity.

How admirable, how extensive, how diversified is the force, of this single principle of attraction || — This penetrates the very essence of all bodies, and diffuses itself to the remotest limits of the mundane system. — By this, the vast worlds

§ Gal. v. 6.

|| I mean the attraction both of Gravitation, and Cohesion.

of matter hang self-balanced on their centres; and, though orbs of immense magnitude, require nothing, but this amazing property, for their support. To this we ascribe a phænomenon, of a very different kind, the pressure of the atmosphere: which, though a yielding and expansive fluid; yet, constituted by an attractive energy; surrounds the whole Globe, and incloses every creature, as it were with a tight bandage. An expedient this absolutely necessary to preserve the texture of our bodies; and indeed, to maintain every species of animal existence.——Urged by this wonderful impetus, the rivers circulate, with a never-failing current, along the veins of the earth; rolling, with torrent rapture, down the steeps, or softly ebbing through the plains. Impelled by the same mysterious force, the nutritious juices are detached from the soil; and, ascending the trees, find their way through millions of the finest meanders, in order to transfuse vegetative life into all the branches.——This confines the Ocean, within proper bounds: Though the waves thereof roar; though they toss themselves, with all the madness of indignant rage; yet, checked by this potent, this inevitable curb, they are unable to pass even the slightest barrier of sand. To this the mountains owe that unshaken firmness, which laughs at the shock of careering winds; and bids the tempest, with all its mingled horrors, impotently rave.——By virtue of this invisible mechanism; without the aid of crane or pulley, or any instrument of human device; many thousand tons of water are raised, every moment, into the regions of the firmament. By this, they continue, suspended in thin air, without any capacious cistern to contain their substance; or any massy pillars to sustain their weight. By this same variously acting power, they drop down again in gentle falls of dew, or are precipitated in copious showers

showers of rain; they slide into the fields in fleecy flights of snow, or are darted upon the houses in clattering storms of hail.——This occasions the strong cohesion of solid bodies: without which, our large machines could exert themselves with no vigour; and the nicer utensils of life would elude our expectations of service. This affords a foundation, for all those delicate or noble mechanic arts; which furnish mankind with numberless conveniences, both of ornament and delight.——In short; this is the prodigious ballast, which composes the *Æquilibrium*, and constitutes the stability of things: this, the great chain, which forms the connexion of universal nature; and the mighty engine, which prompts, facilitates, and, in good measure, accomplishes almost all her operations.—O! what complicated effects, from a single cause†! What profusion, amidst frugality; and unknown profusion of benefits, with the utmost frugality of expence!

AND what is this attraction! Is it a quality, in its existence, inseparable from matter; and, in its acting, independent on the DEITY?—Quite the reverse. It is the very finger of God: the constant impression of divine power: a principle, neither innate in matter, nor intelligible by mortals.——Does it not, however, bear a considerable analogy to the agency of the HOLY GHOST, in the Christian œconomy? Are not the gracious operations of the blessed spirit, thus extensive, thus admirable, thus various?——That Almighty Being transmits his gifts, through every age; and communicates his graces, to every adherent on the Redeemer. All, either of illustrious memory, or of
beneficial

† See another remarkable instance of this kind, in the *Reflections on a Flower-Garden*, page 122—together with a fine observation, quoted in the corresponding note.

beneficial tendency; in a word, "all the good that is done upon earth, he doth it himself." Strong in his aid, and in the power of his might, the saints of all times have trod vice under their feet; have triumphed over this abject world; and conversed in heaven, while they dwelt on earth. Not I, but the grace of God which was with me §, is the unanimous acknowledgment of them all.—

By the same kindly succours, the whole church is still enlightened, quickened, and governed. By his benign influences the scales of ignorance, fall from the understanding; the Leprosy of evil concupiscence is purged from the will; and the fetters, the more than adamantine fetters, of habitual iniquity, drop off from the conversation. He breathes even upon dry bones ¶, and they live; they are animated with faith; they pant with ardent and heavenly desire, they exercise themselves in all the duties of godliness.—His real, though secret, inspiration dissolves the flint in the impenitent breast; and binds up the sorrows, of the broken heart: raises the thoughts high, in the elevations of holy hope; yet lays them low, in the humiliation of inward abasement: steels the soul with impenetrable resolution, and persevering fortitude; and, at the same time, softens it into a dove-like meekness, and melts it in penitential sorrow.

WHEN I contemplate those ample and amazing structures, erected in endless magnificence, over all the æthereal plains:—When I look upon them, as so many splendid repositories of light, or fruitful abodes of life:—When I remember, that, in all probability, there are orbs, vastly more remote, than those which appear to our unaided sight; orbs,

§ 1 Cor. xv. 10.

¶ See that beautiful piece of sacred and allegorical imagery displayed. Ezek. xxivii.

orbs, whose effulgence, though travelling ever since the creation, is not yet arrived upon our coast ¶:—When I stretch my thoughts to the innumerable orders of being, which inhabit all those spacious systems; from the loftiest seraph, that surrounds the throne; to the puny nations, which tinge with blue the surface of the plum §, or mantle the standing pool with green:—O! how various are the links, in this immense chain! How vast the gradations, in this universal scale of existence! Yet all these, however vast and various,
are

¶ If this conjecture (which has no less a person than the celebrated Mr. Huygens for its Author) concerning unseen stars, be true: If, to this observation be added, what is affirmed by our skilful astronomers; that the motion of the rays of light is so surprisngly swift, as to pass through ten millions of miles in a single minute—How vast! beyond imagination vast and unmeasurable, are the spaces of the universe!—While the mind is distended with the grand idea: or rather while she is dispatching her ablest powers of piercing judgment, and excursive fancy; and finds them all drop short; all baffled by the amazing subject: Permit me to apply that beautiful exclamation, and noble remark—

———Say, proud arch,
Built with divine ambition; in disdain
Of limit built; built in the taste of heav'n!
Vast concave! Ample dome! Wast thou design'd
A meet apartment for the DEITY?
Not so: That thought alone thy state impairs:
Thy lofty sinks; and shallows thy profound;
And straitens thy diffusive.———

Night-Thoughts, No. IX.

§ Ev'n the blue down the purple plum surrounds,
A living world, thy failing sight confounds.
To him a peopled habitation shews,
Where millions taste the bounty God bestows.
See a very beautiful, sublime, and instructive poem,
styled—DEITY.

are the work of God's hand, and are full of his presence.

HE rounded in his palm those dreadfully large globes, which are pendulous in the vault of heaven. He kindled those astonishingly bright fires, which fill the firmament with a flood of glory. By him they are suspended in fluid æther, and cannot be shaken: By him they dispense a perpetual tide of beams, and are never exhausted.—He formed, with inexpressible nicety, that exquisitely fine collection of tubes; that unknown multiplicity of subtle springs; which organize and actuate the frame of the minutest insect. He bids the crimson current roll; the vital movements play; and associates a world of wonders, even in an animated point †.—In all these, is a rich exhibition of creating power; to all these, are extended the special regards of preserving goodness. From hence,

R

let

† There are living creatures, abundantly smaller than the mite. Mr. Bradley, in his *Treatise on Gardening*, mentions an insect, which, after accurate examination, he found to be a thousand times less than the least visible grain of sand. At the same time declaring; that such an animalcule, though quite imperceptible to the naked eye, is a bulky being; compared with others, almost infinitely more minute, discovered by Mr. *Lewenhoeck*.—If then we consider the several limbs, which compose (if I may be allowed the expression) such an organized particle: The different springs, which actuate such a set of limbs: The flow of spirits, inexpressibly more attenuated, which put those springs in motion: The various fluids, that circulate: The different secretions, that are performed: Together with the proportionable minuteness of the solids, before they arrive at their full growth: Not to mention other more astonishing modes of diminution.—Sure, we shall see the utmost reason to acknowledge, that the adored Maker is——
MAXIMUS IN MINIMIS; greatly glorious even in his smallest works.

let me learn to rely on the Providence, and to be ever sensible of the presence of the supreme Majesty.

To rely on his Providence.—For, not one being, amidst that inconceivable number and variety, which swarm through the regions of creation; is overlooked, or neglected, by the great omnipotent Cause of all. However inconsiderable in its character, or diminutive in its size, it is still the production of the universal Maker, and belongs to the family of the Almighty Father.—What? Though enthroned Archangels enjoy the smiles of his countenance; yet, the low inhabitants of earth, the most despicable worms that creep the ground, are not excluded from his kind providential cares. Though the manifestation of his perfections is vouchsafed to holy and intellectual essences; his ear is open to the cries of the young raven; his eye attentive to the wants, and to the welfare, of the very meanest births of Nature.—How much less then are his own people disregarded? Those, for whom he has delivered his beloved Son to death, and for whom he has prepared habitations of eternal joy. They disregarded! No: They are “kept as the apple of an eye;” the very hairs of their head are all numbered; and the fondest mother may forget the infant, that is “dandled upon her knees,” and sucks at her breast ¶; much sooner than the Father of everlasting

¶ Isa. xlix. 15. “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the Son of her womb? Yea, they may forget; yet will I not forget thee.”—How delicate, and very expressive, are the images, in this charming Scripture! How full of beauty, if beheld in a critical, how rich with consolation, if considered in a believing view!—Can a woman; one of the softer sex, whose nature is most impressible, and

ing compassions can discontinue, or remit, his watchful tenderness to those, whom he condescends to call, not servants only, but children.

LET this teach me also a more lively sense of the Divine Presence.—All the rolling worlds above; all the living atoms below; together with all the beings that intervene, betwixt these wide extremes, are vouchers for an ever present deity. “God has not left himself without witnesses.” There are the marks of his footsteps in every
R 2 place,

and whose passions are remarkably tender—Can such a one not barely disregard, but intirely forget; not suspend her care for a while, but utterly erase the very memory of—her child; her own child, not another’s; a child, that was formed in her womb, and is a part of herself?—Her son; the more important, and therefore more desirable species; to whom it peculiarly belongs, to preserve the name, and build up the family—Her only son; for the word is singular, and refers to a case, where the offspring, not being numerous, but centered in a single birth, must be productive of the fondest endearment—Can she divest herself of all concern for such a child; not when he is grown up to maturity, or gone abroad from her house; but while he continues in an infantile state, and must owe his whole safety to her kind attendance; while he lies in her bosom, rests on her arm, and even sucks at her breast?—Especially if the poor innocent be racked with pain, or seized by some severe affliction; and so become an object of compassion, as well as of love. Can she hear its piercing cries; can she see it all restless, all helpless under its misery, and feel no emotions of parental pity?—Or, if one such monster of inhumanity might be found; yet, can all mothers be so degenerate? This, sure, need never be feared. Much less need the true believer, be apprehensive of the failure of my kindness. An universal extinction, of these strongest affections of nature is a more supposable case; than that I should ever be unmindful of my people, or regardless of their interests.

place, and the touches of his finger in every creature. "Thy name is so nigh, O thou all supporting, all informing Lord; and that do thy wondrous works declare. Thy goodness warms in the morning sun, and refreshes in the evening breeze. Thy glory shines in the lamps of midnight, and smiles in the blossoms of spring. We see a trace of thy incomprehensible grandeur, in the boundless extent of things; and a sketch of thy exquisite skill, in those almost evanescent sparks of life, the insect race."——O! How stupid is this heart of mine, that amidst such a multitude of remembrancers, thronging on every side, I should forget thee a single moment! Grant me, Thou great I AM; Thou source, and support, of universal existence; O! grant me an enlightened eye, to discern thee in every object; and a devout heart, to adore thee on every occasion. Instead of living without God in the world; may I be ever with him, and see all things full of him†!

If the beautiful spangles, which a clear night pours on the beholder's eye: if those other fires, which beam in remoter skies; and are discoverable only by, that revelation to the sight, the telescope: if all those bright millions are so many fountains of day; enriched with native and independent lustre; illuminating planets, and enlivening systems,

† ——— The glitt'ring stars,
By the deep ear of Meditation heard.
Still in their midnight watches sing of Him.
He nods a calm. The tempest blows his wrath.
The thunder is his voice; and the red flash
His speedy sword of justice. At his touch
The mountains flame. He shakes the solid earth,
And rocks the nations. Nor in these alone,
In ev'ry common instance God is seen.

THOMSON'S SPRING.

systems, of their own*: O! What amazing pomp is disclosed, in the midnight scene! What unknown riches are disseminated through all these numberless provinces of the great Jehovah's empire!—Yet, immense and endless as they are, there's not the meanest slave, but carries incomparably greater wealth in his own bosom. The soul, that informs his clay,——the soul, that teaches him to think, and enables him to choose; that qualifies him to relish rational pleasure, and to breathe sublime desire†;—the soul, that is possessed of such noble faculties; and, above all, is endued with the dreadful, the glorious capacity of being pained, or blessed, for ever——this soul surpasses in worth whatever the eye can see; whatever of material, the fancy can imagine. Before one such intellectual being, all the most astonishing magnificence of unintelligent creation becomes poor and contemptible‡. For

R 3

this,

- * Consult with reason. Reason will reply,
 Each lucid point, which glows in yonder sky,
 Informs a system in the boundless space,
 And fills, with glory, its appointed place:
 With beams unborrow'd, brightens other skies:
 And worlds, to the unknown, with heat and life
 supplies. The Universe.

† In this respect, as vested with such capacities, the soul even of fallen man has an unquestionable greatness and dignity; is majestic, though in ruins.

‡ I beg leave to transcribe a pertinent passage from that celebrated master of reason, and universal literature, Dr. Bentley; whom no man can be tempted to suspect, either tinctured with enthusiasm, or warped to bigotry.——“If we consider, says he, the dignity of an intelligent being, and put that in the scale against brute and inanimate matter, we may affirm, without overvaluing human nature, that the soul of one virtuous and religious man is of greater worth and excellency,

this, Omnipotence itself has waked, and worked, through every age. To convince this soul, the fundamental laws of nature have been controuled; and the most amazing miracles have alarmed all the ends of the earth. To instruct this soul, the wisdom of heaven has been transfused into the sacred page; and missionaries have been sent from the great King, who resides in light unapproachable. To sanctify this soul, the Almighty Comforter takes the wings of a dove; and, with a sweet transforming influence, broods on the human heart. And O! to redeem this soul from guilt; to rescue it from hell; the heaven of heavens was bowed, and God himself came down to dwell in dust.

LET me pause, a moment, upon this important subject.—What are the schemes, which engage the attention of eminent Statesmen, and mighty Monarchs, compared with the grand interests of an immortal soul? The support of commerce, and the success of armies, though extremely weighty affairs; yet, if laid in the balance against the salvation of a soul, are lighter than the downy feather, poised against talents of gold. To save a navy from shipwreck, or a kingdom from slavery, are deliverances of the most momentous nature, that the transactions of mortality can admit. But O! how they shrink into an inconsiderable trifle, if (their aspect upon immortality forgot) they are set in competition with the delivery of a single soul, from the anguish and horrors of a distressed eternity †!

SINCE,

lency, than the sun, and all his planets, and all the stars in the world.” See his sermons at Boyle’s Lect. No. 8.

† Not all yon luminaries quench’d at once
Were half so sad, as one benighted mind,
Which gropes for happiness, and meets despair.
Night-Thoughts, No. IX.

SINCE, such is the soul's importance; what vigilance can be too much; or rather what holy solicitude can be sufficient; for the overseers of the Saviour's flock, and the guardians of his unutterably noble charge?—Since, such is the importance of the soul; wilt thou not, O man, be watchful for the preservation of thy own? Shall every casual incident awaken thy concern; every transitory toy command thy regard? And shall the welfare of thy soul, a work of continual occurrence; a work of endless consequence; sue, in vain, for thy serious care?—Thy soul, thy soul, is thy all. If this be secured, thou art greatly rich, and wilt be unspeakably happy. If this be lost, a whole world acquired will leave thee in poverty; and all its delights enjoyed will abandon thee to misery.

I HAVE often been charmed and awed, at the sight of the nocturnal Heavens; even before I knew how to consider them in their proper circumstances of majesty and beauty. Something like Magic has struck my mind, on a transient and unthinking survey of the æthereal vault; when tinged throughout with the purest azure, and decorated with innumerable starry lamps. I have felt, I know not what, powerful and aggrandizing impulse; that snatched me from the low intanglements of vanity, and prompted an ardent sigh for sublimer objects. Methought, I heard, even from the silent spheres, a commanding call, to spurn the abject earth, and pant after unseen delights.—Henceforward I hope to imbibe more copiously this moral emanation of the skies; when, in some such manner as the preceding, they are rationally seen, and duly weighed. The Stars, I trust, will teach, as well as shine; and help to dispel, both nature's gloom, and my intellectual darkness. To some, they discharge no

higher a service, than that of holding a flambeau to their feet, and softening the horrors of their night. To me, may they be ministers of a superior order; and act as counsellors of wisdom, and guides to happiness. Nor will they fail to execute this noble office, if they gently and gradually light my way, into the knowledge of their adored Maker; and point out, with their silver rays, my path to his beatific presence.

I GAZE, I ponder. I ponder, I gaze; and think ineffable things.—I roll an eye of awe and admiration. Again and again I repeat my ravished views; and can never satiate my sight, in this immense theatre. I spring my thoughts in speculation, till even fancy tires upon her wing. I find wonders, ever new; wonders, more and more amazing.—Yet, after all my present inquiries, what a mere nothing do I know; by all my future searches, how little shall I be able to learn; of those vastly distant Suns, and their circling retinue of worlds! Could I pry with Newton's piercing sagacity, or launch into his most extensive surveys: yet, even then, my apprehensions would be little better, than those dim and scanty images, which the Mole, just emerged from her cavern, receives on her feeble optic.—This, sure, should repress all immoderate thirst, after an insight into the secrets of the starry structures; and make me more careful to cultivate my heart. To fathom the depths of the divine essence; or to scan universal nature, with a critical exactness; is an attempt, that sets the acutest Philosopher, very nearly on a level with the Idiot. Since it is almost, if not altogether, as impracticable by the one, as by the other.

BE it, then, my chief study, not to pursue, what is absolutely unattainable; but rather to seek, what is obvious to find; easy to be acquired; and of inestimable

estimable advantage, when possessed. O! let me seek that charity, which edifieth*; that faith, which purifieth. Love, humble love, and not conceited science, keeps the door of Heaven. Faith, a child-like faith in JESUS; and not the haughty self-sufficient spirit, which scorns to be ignorant of any thing; presents a key † to those abodes of bliss.—This present state is the scene destined to the exercise of devotion; the invisible world is the place appointed for the enjoyment of knowledge ‡. There, the dawn of our infantile minds, will be advanced to the maturity of perfect day; or rather, there our midnight shades will be brightened into all the lustre of noon. There the souls that come from the school of faith, and bring with them the principles of Love, will dwell in light itself; will be obscured with no darkness at all; will know even as they are known.—Such an acquaintance, therefore do I desire to form, and

R 5. to

* 1 Cor. viii. 1. I need not inform my reader, that in this text; in that admirable chapter 1 Cor. xiii. and in various other passages of scripture; the word Charity is by no means to be confined, to the particular act of alms-giving, or external beneficence. It is of a much more exalted and extensive nature. It signifies that noble and divine grace, which warms the soul with a supreme love, to GOD; and enlarges it with a disinterested affection, for men. Which renders it the reigning care of the life, and chief delight of the heart, to promote the glory of the one, and the happiness of the other.——This, this is that charity, of which so many excellent things are every where spoken: which can never be too highly extolled. or too earnestly coveted, since it is the image of GOD, and the very spirit of Heaven.

† By Milton beautifully stiled;
 —————The golden key,
 That opens the palace of eternity.

MILT. COMUS.

‡ 1 Cor. xii. 12.

to carry on such correspondence, with the heavenly bodies; as may shed a benign influence on the seeds of grace, implanted in my breast. Let the exalted tracts of the firmament sink my soul into deep humiliation. Let those eternal fires kindle in my heart an adoring gratitude, to their almighty sovereign. Let yonder ponderous and enormous globes, which rest on his supporting arm, teach me an unshaken affiance, in their incarnate Maker. And I shall be— if not wise as the Astronomical Adept, yet WISE UNTO SALVATION.

HAVING now walked, and worshipped, in this universal temple, that is arched with skies emblazed with stars; and extended even to immensity— Having cast an eye, like the enraptured Patriarch*; an eye of reason and devotion, through the magnificent scene: with the one, having discovered an infinitude of worlds; and with the other, met the Deity in every view— Having beheld, as Moses in the flaming bush, a glimpse of JEHOVAH's excellencies reflected from the planets, and streaming from myriads of celestial luminaries.— Having read various lessons, in that stupendous book of wisdom, where unmeasurable sheets of azure compose the page; and orbs of radiance write, in everlasting characters, a comment on our Creed— What remains, but that I close the midnight solemnity, as our LORD concluded his grand sacramental institution, with the song of praise?— And behold a hymn, suited to the sublime occasion; indited by † inspiration itself; transferred into our language, by ‡ one of the highest and happiest efforts of human ingenuity.

The

* Gen. xv. 5.

† Psal. 119.

‡ Addison, Spect. Vol. VI. No. 465.

ON THE STARRY HEAVENS. 191

The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ætherial sky,
And spangled Heav'ns, a shining frame,
Their great Original proclaim :
Th' unweary'd Sun, from day to day,
Does his Creator's pow'r display,
And publishes, to ev'ry land,
The work of an Almighty hand.

Soon as the ev'ning shades prevail,
The Moon takes up the wond'rous tale,
And nightly to the list'ning earth
Repeats the story of her birth :
While all the Stars, that round her burn,
And all the planets in their turn,
Confirm the tidings as they roll,
And spread the truth from pole to pole.
What though, in solemn silence, all
Move round the dark terrestrial ball ?
What though, nor real voice nor sound
Amid their radiant orbs be found ?
In Reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice,
For ever singing, as they shine,
" The hand that made us is divine."

F I N I S.

ON THE STARRY HEAVENS.

The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ethereal sky,
And deep, unbounded depths below,
Where countless worlds, in numbers show,
Of worlds, and of worlds, and worlds,
Of worlds, and of worlds, and worlds,
Of worlds, and of worlds, and worlds,
Of worlds, and of worlds, and worlds.

As the great God, the Father, Lord,
The Father, Lord, the Father, Lord,
The Father, Lord, the Father, Lord,
The Father, Lord, the Father, Lord,
The Father, Lord, the Father, Lord,
The Father, Lord, the Father, Lord,
The Father, Lord, the Father, Lord,
The Father, Lord, the Father, Lord.

And all the stars, that in the sky,
In the sky, in the sky, in the sky,
In the sky, in the sky, in the sky,
In the sky, in the sky, in the sky,
In the sky, in the sky, in the sky,
In the sky, in the sky, in the sky,
In the sky, in the sky, in the sky,
In the sky, in the sky, in the sky.

T H I S

A
WINTER-PIECE,
AND A
DESCANT ON CREATION:
BEING A
SUPPLEMENT
TO THE
Meditations, Contemplations, &c.

By JAMES HERVEY, A. B.
Late of Lincoln-College, Oxford.

The TWENTY-FIRST EDITION.

D U B L I N:

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M,DCC,LXXXII.

WINTER-PHOC

DESCRANT ON CREATION

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SUPPLEMENT

TO THE

JAMES HENRY, A.D.

THE TWENTY-SECOND EDITION

OF THE

OF THE

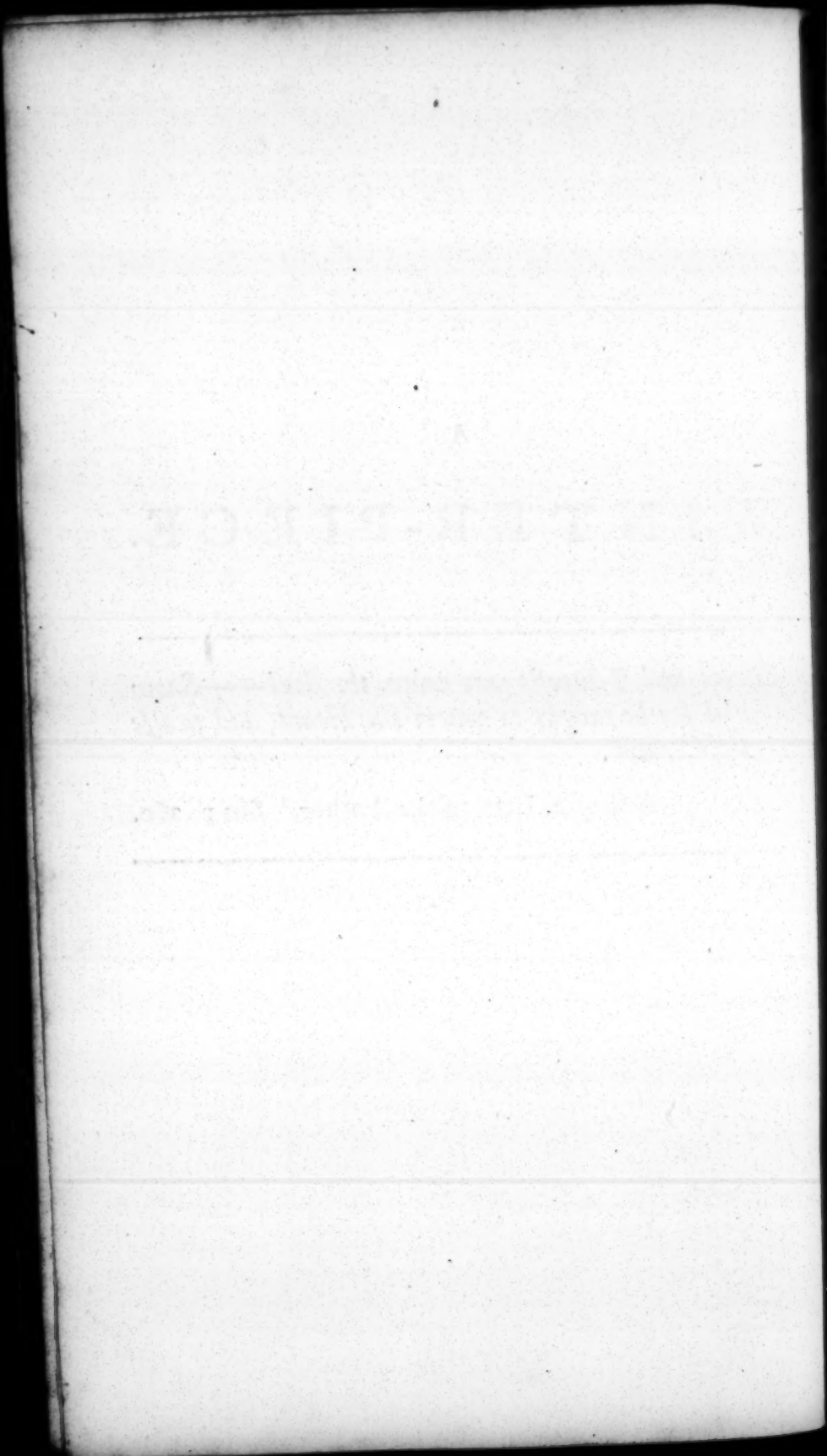
WINTER-PHOC

A

WINTER-PIECE.

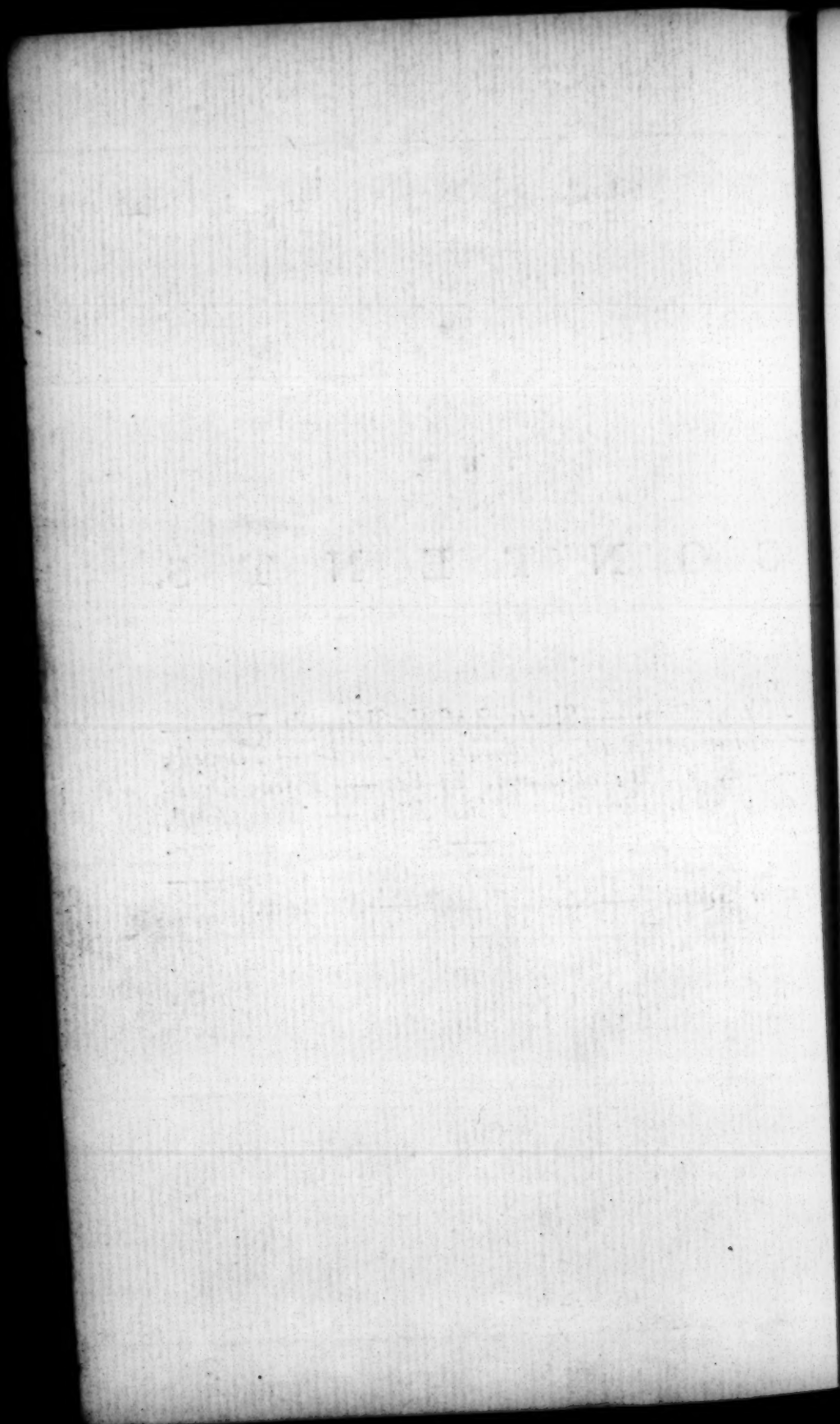
*Storms and Tempests may calm the Soul——Snow
and Ice be taught to warm the Heart, and praise
the Creator.*

Anonym. Lett. to the Author. See p. 260.



T H E
C O N T E N T S.

*I*ntroduction——Shortness of the Winter's Day——
Incessant Rain, producing a Flood——Tempest;
——its effects; at Land, by Sea——Pitchy Dark-
ness; riding in it——Thick Rime——Keen Frost,
and Serenity of Weather——Severe Cold, and pier-
cing Winds——Deep Snow——General Thaw——
Ever-Greens——Storm of Hail——Rainbow.



W I N T E R - P I E C E .

'TIS true, in the delightful season, His tenderness and His love are most eminently displayed.—In the vernal months, all is beauty to the eye, and music to the ear. The clouds drop fatness; the air softens into balm; and flowers, in rich abundance, spring wherever we tread, bloom wherever we look.—Amidst the burning heats of summer, He expands the leaves, and thickens the shades: He spreads the cooling arbour to receive us; and awakes the gentle breeze to fan us; the moss swells into a couch, for the repose of our bodies; while the rivulet softly rolls, and sweetly murmurs to sooth our imagination.—In autumn, His bounty covers the fields with a profusion of yellow treasure; and bends the boughs, with loads of delicious fruit. He furnishes his hospitable table with present plenty, and prepares a copious magazine for future wants.—But, is it only in these smiling periods of the year, that God, the all-gracious God, is seen? Has winter no token of his presence? Is not winter eloquent of his praise? Yes: "His way is in the whirlwind."—Storms and tempests fulfil his word, and extol his power. Even piercing frosts bear witness to his goodness; while they bid the shivering nations tremble at his wrath.

—Be

———Be Winter then, for a while, our theme †. Perhaps, those barren scenes may be fruitful of intellectual improvement. Perhaps, that chilling cold, which binds the earth in icy chains, may serve to enlarge our hearts, and warm them with holy love.

SEE how the day is shortened!——The sun, detained in fairer climes, or engaged in more agreeable services, rises, like an unwilling visitant, with tardy and reluctant steps. He walks, with a shy indifference, along the edges of the southern sky; casting an oblique glance. He just looks upon our dejected world, and scarcely scatters light through the thick air. Dim is his appearance, languid are his gleams, while he continues. Or, if he chance to wear a brighter aspect, and a cloudless brow; yet, like the young and gay in the house of mourning, he seems uneasy till he is gone; is in haste to depart.——And let him depart. Why should we wish for his longer stay; since he can shew us nothing but spectacles of woe? The flowery world lies dead, and the tuneful tribes are struck dumb. The trees stript of their verdure, and lashed by storms, spread their naked arms to the enraged and relentless heavens. Fragrance no longer floats in the air, but chilling damps hover, or cutting gales blow. Nature, divested of all her beautiful robes, sits, like a forlorn disconsolate widow, in her weeds.

While

† A sketch of this nature, I must acknowledge, is quite different from the subject of the book; and, I cannot but declare, was as far distant from the thoughts of the Author. But, the desire of several acquaintance, together with an intimation of its usefulness, by a very polite letter from an unknown hand (which has undesignedly furnished me with the best motto, I could recollect,) prevailed with me to add a few descriptive touches, and improving hints, on what is so often experienced in these northern regions. I hope the attempt I have made to oblige these gentlemen, will obtain the approbation, or at least, the excuse, of my other readers.

While winds, in doleful accents, howl; and rains, in repeated showers, weep.

WE regret not, therefore, the speedy departure of the day. When the room is hung with funeral black, and dismal objects are all around; who would wish to have the glimmering taper kept alive: which can only discover scenes of sorrow; only make the horror visible?—And, since this mortal life is little better than a continual conflict with sin, or an unremitted struggle with misery; is it not a gracious ordination, which has reduced our age to a span? Fourscore years of trial, for the virtuous, are sufficiently long; and more than such a term, allowed to the wicked, would render them beyond all measure vile. Our way to the kingdom of heaven lies through tribulations; shall we then accuse, shall we not rather bless, the providence, which has made the passage short? Soon, soon we cross the vale of tears; and then arrive on the happy hills, where light for ever shines, where joy for ever smiles.

SOMETIMES the day is rendered shorter still; is almost blotted out from the year. The vapours gather; they thicken into an impenetrable gloom; and obscure the face of the sky. At length, the rains descend; the sluices of the firmament are opened; and the low-hung clouds pour their congregated stores. Copious and un-intermitted, still they pour; and still are unexhausted. The waters drop incessantly from the eaves, and rush in rapid streams from the spouts. They roar along the channelled pavements, and stand in foul shallows amidst the village-streets. Now, if the inattentive eye, or negligent hand, has left the roof but scantily covered; the insinuating element finds its way into every flaw, and, oozing through the ceiling, at once upbraids and chastises the careless inhabitant. The ploughman, soaked to the skin, leaves his half-tilled

tilled aeres. The poor poultry, dripping with wet, croud into shelter. The tenants of the bough fold up their wings, afraid to launch into the streaming air. The beasts, joyless and dispirited, ruminate under their sheds. The roads swim, and the brooks swell.—The river, amidst all this watery ferment, long contained itself within its appointed bounds. But, swollen by innumerable currents, and roused, at last, into uncontrollable rage, bursts over its banks; shoots into the plain; bears down all opposition; spreads itself far and wide; and buries the meadow under a brown, sluggish, soaking deluge.

How fortunate for man, that this inundation comes, when there are no flowery crops in the valley, to be overwhelmed; no fields standing thick with corn, to be laid waste! At such a juncture, it would have been ruin to the husbandman and his family: but, thus timed, it yields manure for his ground, and promises him riches in reversion.—How often, and how long, has the divine majesty bore with the most injurious affronts from sinners! His goodness triumphed over their perverseness, and graciously refused to be exasperated. But O! presumptuous creatures, multiply no longer your provocations. Urge not, by repeated iniquities, the Almighty arm to strike; lest his long-suffering cease, and his fierce anger break forth; break forth, like a flood of Waters †, and sweep you away, into irrecoverable perdition.

How mighty! how majestic! and O, how mysterious, are thy works, thou God of heaven, and Lord of nature! When the air is calm, where sleep the stormy winds? in what chambers are they reposed, or in what dungeons confined? Till thou art pleased to awaken thy rage, and throw open their prison doors: Then, with irresistible impetuosity

† Hof. v. 10.

tuosity they fly forth, scattering dread, and menacing destruction.

THE whole atmosphere is hurled into the most tumultuous confusion. The aerial torrent bursts its way over mountains, seas, and continents. All things feel the dreadful shock. All things tremble before the furious blast. The forest, vexed and tore, groans under the scourge: her sturdy sons are strained to the very root, and almost kiss the soil, they were wont to shade. The stubborn oak, that disdains to bend, is dashed headlong to the ground; and, with shattered arms, with prostrate trunk, blocks the road.——While the flexile reed that springs up in the marsh, yielding to the gust (as the meek and pliant temper to injuries; or the resigned and patient spirit to misfortunes); eludes the force of the storm, and survives amidst the wide-spread havock.

FOR a moment, the turbulent and outrageous sky seems to be assuaged; but, it intermits its wrath, only to increase its strength. Soon, the sounding squadrons of the air return to the attack, and renew their ravages with redoubled fury. The stately dome rocks, amidst the wheeling clouds. The impregnable tower totters on its basis; and threatens to overwhelm, whom it was intended to protect. The ragged rock is rent in pieces †; and even the hills, the perpetual hills, on their deep foundations, are scarcely secure.——Where, now, is the place of safety? When the city reels, and houses become heaps! Sleep affrighted flies. Diversion is turned into horror. All is uproar in the element; all is consternation among mortals; and nothing, but one wide scene of rueful devastation, through the land.——Yet, this is only an inferior minister of divine displeasure; the executioner of milder indignation. How then——O, how will

† 1 Kings xix. 11.

will the lofty looks of man be humbled, and haughtiness of men be bowed down †; when the Lord God omnipotent shall meditate terror—when He shall set all his terrors in array—when He arises to judge the nations, and to shake terribly the earth!

THE ocean swells with tremendous commotions. The ponderous waves are heaved from their capacious bed, and almost lay bare the unfathomable deep. Flung into the most rapid agitation, they sweep over the rocks; they lash the lofty cliffs; and toss themselves into the clouds. Navies are rent from their anchors; and with all their enormous load, are whirled, swift as the arrow, wild as the winds, along the vast abyss. Now, they climb the rolling mountain, they plough the frightful ridge, and seem to skim the skies: anon, they plunge into the opening gulph, they lose the sight of day, and are lost themselves to every eye. How vain is the pilot's art! How impotent the mariner's strength! They reel to and fro, and stagger in the jarring hold; or cling to the cordage, while bursting seas foam over the deck. Despair is in every face, and death sits threatening on every furl. — But

†————Mortalia Corda

Per gentes humilis stravit Pavor —

One would almost imagine, that Virgil had read Isaiah, and borrowed his ideas from Chap. ii. ver. 11. The *humilis* and *stravit*, of the one, so exactly correspond with the—humbled—bowed down—of the other. But, in one circumstance, the poet is vastly inferior to the prophet. The latter, by giving a very striking contrast to his sentiments, represents them with incomparably greater energy. He says not men in the gross, or the human heart in general; but men of the most elated looks; hearts big with the most arrogant imaginations; even haughtiness itself shall stoop from their supercilious heights, shall grovel in the lowest dust of abasement, and shudder with the extremes of an abject pusillanimity.

—But why, O ye astonished mariners, why should you abandon yourselves to despair? Is the LORD's hand shortened, because the waves of the sea rage horribly? Is his ear deafened, by the roaring thunders, and the bellowing tempest? Cry, Cry, unto HIM, who "holdeth the winds in his fist, and the waters in the hollow of his hand." He is all-gracious, to hear; and almighty to save. If HE command, the storm shall be hushed to silence: the billows shall subside into a calm: the lightnings shall lay their fiery bolts aside: and, instead of sinking in a watry grave, you shall find yourselves brought to the desired haven.

SOMETIMES, after a joyless day, a more melancholy night succeeds.—The lazy, lowering vapours had wove so thick a veil, as the meridian sun could scarcely penetrate. What gloom then must overwhelm the nocturnal hours! The moon withdraws her shining. Not a single star is able to struggle through the deep arrangement of shades. All is pitchy darkness, without one enlivening ray. How solemn! How awful! 'Tis like the return of Chaos, or the shroud of nature. I don't wonder, that it is the parent of terrors, and so apt to engender fear. Lately, the tempest marked its rapid way with mischief; now, the night dresses her silent pavilion with horror.

I HAVE sometimes left the beaming tapers withdrawn from the ruddy fire, and plunged into the thickest of these sooty shades: not, in the least regretting the change, but rather exulting in it, as a welcome deliverance. The very gloom was pleasing, was exhilarating, compared with the conversation I quitted. The speech of my companions (How does it grieve me, that I should even once have occasion to call them by that name!) was the language of darkness; was horror to the soul,

S

and

and torture to the ear*.—Alas! that I should have room to make the reflection! may I never be under a necessity of repeating it! their tongues were dipt in the venom of asps: “their throat was an open sepulchre;” cruel to their neighbour’s character, as the grave; and insatiable in slanderous assassination, as the grave in devouring her prey. Sometimes, their licentious and ungovernable discourse, shot arrows of profaneness against Heaven itself; and, in proud defiance, challenged the resentment of Omnipotence. Sometimes, as if it was the glory of human nature, to share and cherish some of the grossest appetites of the brute; and the mark of a gentleman, to have served an apprenticeship in a brothel; the filthiest jests of the stews (if low obscenity can be a jest) were nauseously obtruded on the company, till all the modest part of it was expelled: while the other besotted creatures laughed aloud, though the leprosy of uncleanness appeared on their lips.—Are not these persons prisoners of darkness; though blazing sconces pour artificial day through the rooms? Are not their souls immured in the most baleful shades; though the noon-tide sun is brightened, by flaming on their gilded chariots? They discern not that great and adorable Being, who fills the universe

* What has been said, I ask’d my Soul what done?
How flow’d our mirth! or whence the source begun?
Perhaps, the jest, that charm’d the sprightly croud,
And made the jovial table laugh so loud,
To some false notion ow’d its poor pretence,
To an ambiguous word’s perverted sense;
To a wild sonnet, or a wanton air,
Offence and torture to the sober ear.

Perhaps, alas! the pleasing stream was brought
From this man’s error, from another’s fault;
From topics, which good-nature would forget,
And prudence mention with the last regret.

Prior’s Solomon.

universe with his infinite and glorious presence : who is all eye, to observe their actions ; all ear, to hear their words. They know not the all-sufficient Redeemer, nor the unspeakable blessedness of his heavenly kingdom. They are groping for the prize of happiness ; but will certainly grasp the thorn of anxiety. They are wantonly sporting on the brink of that precipice ; from whence, in a moment they may fall headlong into irretrievable ruin, and endless despair.

THEY have forced me out, and are, perhaps, deriding me in my absence : are charging my reverence for my Maker, and real sense of the excellency of the Rational Nature, to the account of humour and singularity ; narrowness of thought, or sourness of temper. But be it so, — I will indulge no indignation against them ; and, if any thing like it should arise, I will convert it into prayer. — “ Pity them, Oh thou Father of Mercies ! — Shew them the madness of their profaneness — Shew them the baseness of their vile ribaldry — Let them be dumb, in silent shame and confusion ; till they open their lips, to adore thine insulted majesty — to implore thy pardon — and humbly devote to thee those social hours, those injured faculties, which they are now abusing to thy dishonour ; to their own mutual contamination ; and (unless timely repentance intervene) to their common infamy, and final perdition.”

I RIDE home amidst the gloomy void : all darkling and solitary, I can scarce discern my horse's head ; and only guess out my blind road. No companion, but Danger ; or perhaps, “ Destructive on ready at my side *.” — But, why do I fancy myself solitary ? Is not the father of lights ; the God of my life ; the great and everlasting friend ;

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always

* Job xviii. 12.

always at my right hand? Because the day is excluded, is his omnipotence vacated? Though I have no earthly acquaintance near, to assist in case of a misfortune; or to beguile the time, and divert uneasy suspicions, by entertaining conferences: May I not lay my help upon the Almighty, and converse with God by humble supplication? For this exercise, no place is improper; no hour unseasonable; and no posture incommodious. This is society, the best of society, even in solitude. This is a fund of delights, easily portable, and quite inexhaustible. A treasure this of unknown value; and liable to no hazard from wrong or robbery; but perfectly secure to the lonely wanderer, in the most darksome paths.

AND why should I distress myself with apprehensions of perils? This access to God is not only an indefeasible privilege, but a kind of ambulatory garrison. Those that make known their requests unto God, and rely upon his protecting care; he gives his angels charge over their welfare. His angels are commissioned to escort them in their travelling; and to hold up their goings, that they dash not their foot against a stone. Nay, he himself condescends to be their guardian, and "keeps" "all their bones, so that not one of them is broken." They are, according to the certificate of revelation, "in league with the stones of the field*." Though they fall headlong on the flints, even the flints, fitted to fracture the skull, shall receive them as into the arms of friendship; and not offer to hurt whom the Lord is pleased to preserve.

MAY I then enjoy the presence of this gracious God; and darkness and light shall be both alike. Let HIM whisper peace to my conscience; and this dread silence shall be more charming than the voice

* Job v. 23.

voice of eloquence, or the strains of music. Let HIM reveal his ravishing perfections in my soul; and I shall not want the saffron-beauties of the morn, the golden glories of noon, or the impurpled evening sky. I shall sigh only for those most desirable and distinguished realms; where the light of HIS countenance perpetually shines, and consequently — “there is no * night there.”

How surprising are the alterations of nature? I left her the preceding evening, plain and unadorned. But, now, a thick Rime has shed its hoary honours over all. It has shagged the fleeces of the sheep, and crisped the traveller's locks. The hedges are richly fringed, and all the ground profusely powdered. The downward branches are tasseled with silver, and the upright are feathered with the plumy wave.

BUT, the Fine are not always the Valuable. The air, amidst all these gaudy decorations, is charged with chilling, and unwholesome damps. The hazy influence spreads wide; sits deep; hangs heavy and oppressive on the springs of life. A listless languor clogs the animal functions; and the purple stream glides but faintly thro' its channels. In vain, the ruler of the day exerts his beaming powers; in vain he attempts to disperse this insurrection of vapours. The sullen, malignant cloud refuses to depart. It envelops the world, and intercepts the prospect. I look abroad for the neighbouring village; I send my eye in quest of the rising turret; but am scarce able to discern the very next house. Where are the blue arches of heaven; where the radiant countenance of the sun; where the boundless scenes of creation? Lost, lost are their beauties; quenched their glories. The thronged theatre of the universe seems an empty void; and all its elegant pictures, an undistin-

guished blank.—Thus would it have been with our intellectual view, if the Gospel had not come in to our relief. We should have known neither our true good, nor real evil. We had been a riddle to ourselves; the present state all confusion, and the future, impenetrable darkness. But, the Sun of Righteousness, arising with potent and triumphant beams, has dissipated the interposing cloud; and opened a Prospect more beautiful than the blossoms of Spring; more chearing than the treasures of autumn; more enlarged than the extent of the visible system: Which, having led the eye of the mind thro' fields of Grace, over rivers of righteousness, and hills crowned with knowledge; terminates, at length in the heavens; sweetly losing itself in regions of infinite bliss, and endless glory.

As I walk along the fog, it seems, at some little distance, to be almost solid gloom; such as would shut out every glimpse of light, and totally imprison me in obscurity. But, when I approach, and enter it; I find myself agreeably mistaken, and the mist much thinner than it appeared.—Such is the case with regard to the sufferings of the present life; they are not, when experienced, so dreadful, as a timorous imagination surmised. Such also is the case, with reference to the gratifications of sense; they are not so substantial as a sanguine expectation represented. In both instances we are graciously disappointed: the edge of the calamity is blunted, that it may not wound us with incurable anguish: the exquisite relish of the prosperity is palled, that it may not captivate our affections, and enslave them to inferior delights.

SOMETIMES, the face of things wears a more pleasing form; the very reverse of the foregoing. The sober evening advances, to close the short-lived day. The firmament, clear and unfulled, puts on its

its brightest blue. The stars, in thronging multitudes, and with a peculiar brilliancy, glitter thro' the fair expanse. While the frost pours its subtle and penetrating influence all around. Sharp and intensely keen all the long night, the rigid Æther continues its operations. When, late and slow, the morning opens her pale eye; in what a curious and amusing disguise is nature dressed! The icicles, jagged and uneven, are pendent on the houses. A white-ish film incrusts the windows, where mimic landscapes rise, and fancied figures swell. The fruitful fields are hardened to iron; the moistened meadows are congealed to marble; and both resound (an effect unknown before) with the peasant's hasty tread. The stream is arrested in its career, and its overflowing surface chained to the banks. The fluid paths become a solid road: where the finny shoals were wont to rove, the sportive youth slide, or the rattling chariots roll *. And (what would seem to an inhabitant of the Southern world, as unaccountable as the deepest mysteries of religion) that very same breath of heaven, which cements the lakes into a crystal pavement, cleaves the oaks, as it were, with invisible wedges: "breaks in pieces the northern iron, and the steel;" while it builds a bridge of icy rock over the seas.

S 4

THE

* Concreſcunt ſubito currenti in flumine cruſtæ;
Undaque jam tergo ferratos ſuſtinet orbes,
Puppibus illa prius patulis, nunc hoſpita plauſtris.
Æraque diſſiliunt vulgo. VIRG.

§ Job xxviii. 30. The waters are hid, locked up from the Cattle's lips, ſecured from the Fiſhers nets, and concealed from the human eye, as wells are with a ponderous and impenetrable ſtone. And not only lakes and rivers, but the ſurface of the great and boundleſs deep, with its reſtleſs and uncontrollable ſurges, is taken captive יתלכרן by the Froſt, and bound in ſhining Fetters.

THE air is all serenity. Refined by the nitrous particles, it affords the most distinct views, and extensive prospects. The seeds of infection are killed; and the pestilence destroyed, even in embryo. So the cold of affliction tends to mortify our corruptions, and subdue our vicious habits.— The crowding atmosphere constricts our bodies, and braces our nerves. The spirits are buoyant, and fall briskly on the execution of their office. Had we been under such unclouded skies, and so bright a sun in the summer months; we should have been melted with heat, and softened into supineness: been ready to stretch our limbs under the spreading beach, and lie at ease by the murmuring brook. But, now, none loiters in his path; none is seen with folded arms: all is in motion; all is activity; Choice, prompted by the weather, supplies the spur of necessity. Thus, the rugged school of misfortune often trains up the mind, to a lively exertion of its faculties; the keen climate of adversity often inspirits us with a manly resolution: when a soft and downy affluence, perhaps, would have relaxed all the generous spring of the soul, and have left it enervated with pleasure, or dissolved in indolence.

“COLD cometh out of the North.” The winds, having swept those deserts of snow, arm themselves with millions of frozen particles, and make a fierce descent upon our isle. Under black and scowling clouds they drive, dreadfully whizzing, through the darkened air. They growl around our houses; assault our doors: and eager for entrance, fasten on our windows. Walls can scarce restrain them; Bars are unable to exclude them; through every cranny they force their way. Ice is on their wings, they scatter agues through the land; and Winter, all Winter, rages as they

go. Their breath is as searing * Iron to the little verdure left in the plains. Vastly more pernicious to the tender plants than the sharpest knife; they not only kill their branches, but wound the very root. Let not the corn venture far, from the entrenchment of the furrow; let not the fruit-bearing blossoms dare to come abroad from their lodgment in the bark; lest these savage, murderous blasts destroy the hope of the advancing year.

OH, 'tis severely cold! Who is so hardy as not to shrink at this excessively pinching weather? Every face is pale. Even the blooming cheeks contract a gelid hue; and the teeth hardly forbear chattering.—Ye that sit easy and joyous, in your commodious apartments, solacing yourselves in the diffusive warmth of your fire; be mindful of your brethren, in the cheerless tenement of poverty. Their shattered panes are open to the piercing winds; a tattered garment scarcely covers their shivering flesh; while a few faint and dying embers on the squalid hearth rather mock their wishes than warm their limbs. ————— While the generous juices of Oporto sparkle in your glasses; or the streams, beautifully tinged, and deliciously flavoured, by the Chinese leaf, smok in the elegant Porcelain: O remember, that many of your fellow-creatures, amidst all the rigour of these inclement skies, are emaciated with sickness; benumbed with age; and pining with hunger. Let “their loins
“ bless you,” for comfortable cloathing! supply
S 5 them

* This, I suppose, is the meaning of that figurative expression, used by the Prophet Habakkuk; who speaking of the Chaldæans invading Judæa, says—Their faces, or the incursions they make, shall sup up, shall swallow greedily, shall devour utterly, the inhabitants of the country, and their valuable effects; as the keen, corroding blasts of the east-wind destroy every green thing in the field. Hab. i. 9.

them with food, with fuel; and baffle the raging year. So, may you never know any of their distresses, but only by the hearing of the ear; the seeing of the eye; or the feeling of a tender commiseration!——Methinks, the bitter blustering winds plead for the poor indigents: may they breathe pity into your breasts! while they blow hardships into their huts.——Observe those blue flames and ruddy coals in your chimney! quickened by the cold, they look more lively, and glow more strongly. Silent, but seasonable admonition to the gay circle, that chat and smile around them! Thus, may your hearts, at such a juncture of need, kindle into a peculiar benevolence! detain not your superfluous piles of wood. Let them hasten to the relief of the starving family. Bid them expire in many a willing blaze, to mitigate the severity of the season, and cheer the bleak abodes of want: So shall they ascend, mingled with thanksgivings to God, and ardent prayers for your welfare—ascend, more grateful to heaven, than curling columns of the most costly incense.

Now the winds cease. Having brought their load, they are dismissed from service. They have waisted an immense cargo of clouds, which empty themselves in snow. At first, a few scattered shreds come wandering down the saddened sky. This slight skirmish is succeeded by a general onset. The flakes, large and numerous, and thick-wavering, descend in a continual flow. All night, the fleecy showers, in softest silence, fall. In the morning, when we awake, what a surprising change appears!——Is this the same world?——Here is no diversity of colour! I can hardly distinguish the trees, from the hills on which they grow. Where is the difference between the grounds, destined to the plough; and those, reserved for pasturage? All things lie blended in bright confusion.

fusion. So bright, that it heightens the splendor of day, and even dazzles the organs of sight. The lawn is not so fair, as this snowy mantle, which invests the fields; and even the lily, was the lily to appear, would look tarnished in his presence. I can think but of one thing, which excels, or equals, this glittering robe of winter. Is any one desirous to know what I mean? He may find it described, in that admirable hymn *, composed by the royal penitent. Is any one desirous to be possessed of so valuable a rarity? He will find it offered to his acceptance, in every page of the gospel.—See! (for the eye cannot satisfy itself, without viewing again and again the curious, the delicate scene) See! how the hedges are habited, like spotless vestals: the houses are roofed with uniformity and lustre: the meadows are covered with a carpet of the finest ermine †: the groves bow, beneath the lovely burthen: and all, all below, is one wide, immense, shining waste of white.

AMAZING are the works of the great Creator, and prodigiously various. How pliant and ductile is nature, under his forming hand! at his command the self-same substance assumes the most different shapes; and is transformed into an endless multiplicity of figures. If HE ordains, the water is moulded into hail, and discharged upon the earth like a volley of shot; or, it is consolidated into ice, and defends the rivers, “as it were with a “breast-plate.” At the bare intimation of his will, the very same element is scattered in hoarfrost, like a sprinkling of the most attenuated ashes; or, is spread over the surface of the ground,

* Psalm. li. 7. See page 145, 146.

† This animal is milk-white; and so far is it from having spots, that, as the tradition goes, it will rather die, or be taken, than sully its whiteness. See Chambers's Dictionary.

ground, in these swelling couches of deep and flaky down.

THE snow, however it may carry the appearance of cold, affords a warm garment for the corn; screens it from nipping frosts, and cherishes its infant growth. It will abide for a while, to exert a protecting care, and exercise a fostering influence. Then, touched by the sun, or thawed by a softening gale; the furry vesture melts into genial moisture; sinks deep into the soil, and saturates its pores with the dissolving nitre: replenishing the glebe with that vegetative life, which will open into the bloom of spring, and ripen into the fruits of autumn.—Beautiful emblem this, and comfortable representation of the efficacy of the divine word: both in the successful and advantageous issue of its operation! “As the rain cometh down, and the snow from Heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be, that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it*.”

NATURE, at length, puts off her lucid veil. She drops it in a trickling thaw. The loosened snow rolls in sheets from the houses. Various openings spot the hills; which, even while we look, become larger, and more numerous. The trees rid themselves, by degrees, of the hoary incumbrance. Shook from the springing boughs, part falls heavy to the ground, part flies abroad in shining atoms. Our fields and gardens, lately buried beneath the drifted heaps, rise plain and distinct to view.—And, since we see nature once again, has she no verdant traces, no beautiful features,

* Isa. lv. 10, 11.

tures, left? They are, like real friends, very rare; and therefore the more particularly to be regarded, the more highly to be valued.—Here and there, the Holly hangs out her glowing berries; the Laurustinus spreads her graceful tufts; and both, under a covert of unfading foliage.—The plain, but hardy ivy, cloaths the decrepit, crazy wall; nor shrinks from the friendly office; tho' the skies frown, and the storm roars.—The Laurel, firm, erect, and bold, expands its leaf of vivid green. In spite of all the united, the repeated attacks of wind, and rain, and frost, it preserves an undismayed lively look; and maintains its post, while withering millions fall around. Worthy, by vanquishing the rugged force of winter, worthy to adorn the triumphant conqueror's brow.—Nor must I forget the Bay-tree; which scorns to be a mean pensioner on a few sunny gleams; or, with a servile obsequiousness, to vary its appearance, in conformity to the changing seasons. By such indications of sterling worth, and staunch resolution, reading a lecture to the poet's genius; while it weaves the chaplet for his temples.—These, and a few other plants, clad in their native verdure, retain their comely aspect, in the bleakest climes, and coldest months.

SUCH, and so durable, are the accomplishments of a refined understanding, and an amiable temper. The tawdry ornaments of dress, which catch the unthinking vulgar, soon become insipid and despicable. The rubied lip, and the flushing cheek, fade. Even the sparkling wit †, as well as the sparkling

† “How little does God esteem the things that men count great; the endowments of wit and eloquence, that men admire in some! Alas! how poor are they
to

sparkling eye, please but for a moment. But the virtuous mind has charms, which survive the decay of every inferior embellishment; charms which add to the fragrantcy of the flower, the permanency of the ever-green.

SUCH, likewise, is the Happiness of the sincerely Religious; like a tree, says the inspired Moralist, "whose leaf shall not fall." He borrows not his peace from external circumstances; but has a fund within; and is, "satisfied from himself." Even though impoverished by misfortunes, he is rich in the possession of grace, and richer in the hope of glory. His joys are infinitely superior to, as well

as

to him! He respecteth not any who are wise in heart: they are nothing, and less than nothing, in his eyes. Even wise men admire how little it is that men know; how small a matter lies under the sound of these popular wonders, a learned man, a great scholar, a great statesman. How much more doth the all-wise God meanly account of these! He often discovers, even to the world, their meanness. He befools them. So valour, or birth, or worldly greatness; these he gives, and gives as things he makes no great reckoning of, to such as shall never see his face; and calls to the inheritance of glory poor despised creatures, that are looked on as the off-scourgings and refuse of the world."

—Thus says an excellent author, who writes with the most amiable spirit of benevolence; with the most unaffected air of humility; and, like the sacred originals, from which he copies, with a majestic simplicity of style.—Whose select works I may venture to recommend, not only as a treasure, but as a mine of genuine, sterling, evangelical piety.—See page 520, of Archbishop Leighton's select works, the Edinburgh edition, octavo: Which it is necessary to specify, because the London edition does not contain that part of his writings which has supplied me with the preceding quotation.

as nobly independent on, the transitory glory of sensual delight, or the capricious favours of what the world calls, fortune.

If the Snow composes the light-armed troops of the sky; methinks the Hail constitutes its heavy artillery. When driven by a vehement wind, with what dreadful impetuosity does that stony shower fall! How it rebounds from the frozen ground, and rattles on the resounding dome! It attenuates the rivers into smoke, or scourges them into foam. It crushes the infant flowers; cuts in pieces the gardener's early plants; and batters the feeble fortification of his glasses, into shivers. It darts into the traveller's face: he turns, with haste, from the stroke; or feels, on his cheek, for the gushing blood: if he would retreat into the house, it follows him even thither; and, like a determined enemy, that pushes the pursuit, dashes through the crackling panes.—But, the fierce attack is quickly over. The clouds have soon spent their shafts; soon unstrung their bow. How happy for the inhabitants of the earth, that what is so dreadfully furious should be so remarkably short! what else could endure the shock, or escape destruction?

BUT, behold a Bow, of no hostile intention; a bow, painted in variegated colours, on the disburdened cloud. How vast is the extent, how delicate the texture, of that showery arch! It compasseth the Heavens with a glorious circle; and make us forget the horrors of the storm. Elegant its form, and rich its tinctures; but more delightful its sacred significance. While the violet and the rose blush in its beautiful aspect; the olive-branch smiles in its gracious import. It writes, in radiant dyes, what the angels sung in harmonious strains; “peace on earth, and goodwill towards men.” It is the stamp of
Insurance,

Insurance, for the continued welfare of this present world; and a comfortable token of a better state, and happier kingdom:——a kingdom, where a Rainbow is represented, as furrounding the throne*; to intimate, that there storms shall beat, and Winter pierce no more: but one unbounded Spring for ever, ever bloom.

* Rev. iv. 3.

A DESCANT

A
D E S C A N T
U P O N
C R E A T I O N.

*With Joy, with Grief, that healing Hand I see ;
The Skies it form'd, and yet it bled for me.*
Night-Thoughts, No. IV.

THE
C O N T E N T S.

*The Design of the Whole—Angels—the visible
Heavens — Stars — Comets — Planets—Sun—
Moon—Thunders—Lightnings — Clouds, win-
try and vernal — Rainbow — Storms and Tem-
pests — Pestilence — Heat and Cold — Ocean—
Woods and Shrubs — Vine and Fruit-trees —
Meadows and Fields — Mines and Jewels—
Fountains and Rivers — Birds — Bees — Silk-
worm — Cattle, and Creatures in every Ele-
ment—general Chorus of Praise.*

THE
CONTENTS

1. The first part of the book is devoted to a description of the various species of the genus *Canis*, which includes the wolf, the dog, and the jackal. The second part of the book is devoted to a description of the various species of the genus *Vulpes*, which includes the fox and the jackal. The third part of the book is devoted to a description of the various species of the genus *Lynx*, which includes the lynx and the bobcat. The fourth part of the book is devoted to a description of the various species of the genus *Felis*, which includes the cat and the leopard. The fifth part of the book is devoted to a description of the various species of the genus *Panthera*, which includes the tiger and the lion. The sixth part of the book is devoted to a description of the various species of the genus *Uncia*, which includes the snow leopard. The seventh part of the book is devoted to a description of the various species of the genus *Acinonyx*, which includes the cheetah. The eighth part of the book is devoted to a description of the various species of the genus *Protonotris*, which includes the cheetah. The ninth part of the book is devoted to a description of the various species of the genus *Neofelis*, which includes the clouded leopard. The tenth part of the book is devoted to a description of the various species of the genus *Homotherium*, which includes the saber-toothed cat. The eleventh part of the book is devoted to a description of the various species of the genus *Machairodontinae*, which includes the saber-toothed cat. The twelfth part of the book is devoted to a description of the various species of the genus *Megistonyx*, which includes the saber-toothed cat. The thirteenth part of the book is devoted to a description of the various species of the genus *Megistonyx*, which includes the saber-toothed cat. The fourteenth part of the book is devoted to a description of the various species of the genus *Megistonyx*, which includes the saber-toothed cat. The fifteenth part of the book is devoted to a description of the various species of the genus *Megistonyx*, which includes the saber-toothed cat. The sixteenth part of the book is devoted to a description of the various species of the genus *Megistonyx*, which includes the saber-toothed cat. The seventeenth part of the book is devoted to a description of the various species of the genus *Megistonyx*, which includes the saber-toothed cat. The eighteenth part of the book is devoted to a description of the various species of the genus *Megistonyx*, which includes the saber-toothed cat. The nineteenth part of the book is devoted to a description of the various species of the genus *Megistonyx*, which includes the saber-toothed cat. The twentieth part of the book is devoted to a description of the various species of the genus *Megistonyx*, which includes the saber-toothed cat.

A
DESCANT
UPON
CREATION.

IF the Reader pleases to look back to page 185; he will find me engaged by a promissory note, to subjoin a DESCANT upon CREATION.

To know the love of CHRIST; to have such a deep apprehension of his unspeakable kindness, as may produce in our hearts an adoring gratitude to his dying majesty, and an unfeigned faith in his precious merits; this, according to St. Paul's estimate, is the highest and happiest attainment in the sacred science of Christianity*. The following is an attempt to assist the attentive mind, in learning a line or two of that best and greatest lesson. It introduces the most conspicuous parts of the visible system, as so many Prompters to our dull affections; each suggesting a Hint, adapted to the important occasion, and suited to its respective character.

CAN

* Eph. iii. 10.

CAN there be a more powerful incentive to this heavenly temper, than to consider the magnificent and delicate scenes of the universe, with a particular reference to Christ, as the Creator?—— Every object, viewed in this light, will, I hope, administer incessant Recruits to the languishing lamp of divine love. Every production in nature will strike a spark into the soul: and the whole creation concur, to raise that smouldering flax into a flame.

CAN any thing impart a stronger Joy to the Believer; or more effectually tend to confirm his affiance in the crucified Lamb, than to behold the heavens declaring his glory, and the firmament shewing his handy-work? Surely, it must be a matter of inexpressible consolation to the poor sinner; to observe the honours of his Redeemer, written with sun-beams, over all the face of the world.

LET those, therefore, who delight to read an account of the incarnate Jehovah, as he is revealed in the books of Moses and the prophets, the evangelists and apostles, endeavour, accustom themselves, to see a sketch of his perfections; as they stand delineated in that stately volume, where every Leaf is a spacious plain—every Line a flowing brook—every Period a lofty mountain.

SHOULD any of my readers be unexercised in such speculations, I beg leave (in pursuance of my promise) to present them with a specimen; to offer a clue, which may possibly lead their minds into this most improving and delightful train of thinking.

SHOULD

SHOULD any be inclined to suspect the following observations, as the voice of rant, or the lawless flights of fancy; rather than acquiesce in them, as the Words of Truth and Soberness: I intreat such persons to recollect, That they are warranted by the unanimous testimony of the inspired penmen, who frequently celebrate IMMANUEL, or CHRIST JESUS, as the great Almighty cause of all; assuring us, that "all things were created by him, and for him; and that in him all things consist *."

ON such a subject, what is wonderful is far from being extravagant. To be wonderful is the grand characteristic of God and his works, especially, of that most distinguished and glorious even of the divine works, REDEMPTION. So glorious, that, "all the miracles in Egypt, and the marvellous acts in the field of Zoan;" all that the Jewish annals have recorded, or the human ear has heard; dwindle into trivial events, and are scarce worthy to be remembered†, in comparison of this stupendous transaction.——Kindled, therefore, into pleasing astonishment, by such a survey; let me give full scope to my meditations, and pour out my whole soul on so boundless a subject; regardless of the limits, which cold criticism might prescribe.

O YE Angels, that surround the throne; ye princes of heaven, "that excel in strength," and are clothed with transcendent brightness; he who placed you in those stations of exalted honour,
who

* Coloss. i. 16, 17. Before my reader enters upon the following Descant, he is desired to peruse the note, page 102, 103, of Reflections on a Flower-Garden.

† Isa. xliii. 18.

who dignified your nature with such illustrious endowments; he, whom you all obey, and all adore: —HE took not on him the angelic form, but united himself to frail flesh and blood; communicated with us wretched mortals in our weariness, our pains, and all our infirmities, sin only excepted: —That we might, one day, be raised to your sublime abodes; be adopted into your blissful society; and join with your transported choir, in giving glory to HIM that sitteth upon the throne, and to the LAMB for ever and ever *.

O YE Heavens, whose azure arches rise so immensely high, and stretch so unmeasurably wide: stupendous amphitheatre; amidst whose vast expansive circuit, orbs of enormous magnitude are perpetually running their amazing races: unfathomable depths of æther; where worlds unnumbered float, and to our limited sight, worlds unnumbered are lost: —He, who adjusted your dimensions with his span, and formed the magnificent structure with his word; HE was once wrapt in swaddling cloaths, and laid in a manger: —that the benefits accruing to his people, through his most meritorious humiliation, might have no other measure of their value than immensity; might run parallel, in their duration, with eternity.

O YE Stars, that beam with such inextinguishable brilliancy, through the midnight sky; oceans of flame, and centres of worlds, though seemingly little points of light. —He, who shone, with essential effulgence, innumerable ages, before your twinkling tapers were kindled; and will shine, with everlasting majesty and beauty, when your places shall be known no more: HE was involved, for many years, in the deepest obscurity; lay concealed,

* Rev. v. 13.

cealed, in the contemptible city of Nazareth lay disguised, under the mean habit of a carpenter's son : — that he might plant the heavens *, as it were, with new constellations ; and exalt the clods of earth to a radiancy, superior to yours : a radiancy, which will adorn the very heaven of heavens, when you shall vanish away like smoke † ; or expire, as momentary sparks from the smitten steel.

COMETS ; that sometimes shoot into the illimitable tracts of Æther, farther than the discernment of our eye is able to follow ; sometimes return from the long, long excursion, and sweep our affrighted hemisphere with your enormous fiery train ; that sometimes make near approaches to the sun, and burn almost in his immediate beams ; sometimes retire to very remote distances, and freeze, for ages, in the excessive rigours of winter : — He, who, at his sovereign pleasure, withdraws the blazing wonder : or leads forth the portentous stranger, to shake terror over guilty kingdoms : HE was overwhelmed with the most shocking amazement, and plunged into the deepest anxiety ; was chilled with apprehensions of fear, and scorched by the flames of avenging wrath : — That I, and other
T rebellious

* Isa. li. 16.

† Alluding to the passage in Isaiah, which is, I think, grand and elevated beyond all comparison — Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath : for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die like the feeble insect ; but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation shall not be abolished, Isa. li. 6. — With the great Vitranga, I translate the words *כמו נחש*, not, “in like manner,” but, “like the feeble insect.” Which renders the period more complete ; the sense more emphatical ; and is more agreeable to the genius of the sacred original.

rebellious creatures might not be for ever agitated, in the extremes of jarring passions ; opposite, yet, on either side, tormenting ; far more tormenting to the soul, than the severest degrees of your heat and cold to the human sense.

YE planets ; that, winged with unimaginable speed, traverse the regions of the sky ; sometimes climbing millions and millions of miles above, sometimes descending as far below, the great axle of your motions : Ye, that are so minutely faithful to the vicissitudes of day and night ; so exactly punctual, in bringing on the changes of your respective seasons :—He, who launched you at first, from his mighty arm ; who continually impels you with such wonderful rapidity : and guides you, with such perfect regularity : Who “ fixes the habitation of his holiness, and his glory,” infinite heights above your scanty rounds : HE once became a helpless infant ; sojourned in our inferior world ; fled from the persecutors sword ; and wandered as a vagabond in a foreign land ;—that he might lead our feet into the way of peace ; that he might bring us aliens near to GOD, bring us exiles home to heaven.

THOU sun ; inexhausted source of light, and heat, and comfort ; without whose presence an universal gloom would ensue, and horror insupportable : Who, without the assistance of any other fire, sheddest day through a thousand realms ; and, not confining thy munificence to realms only, extendest thy enlightening influences to surrounding worlds : Prime chearer of the animal, and great enliverer of the vegetable tribes : so beautiful in thyself, so beneficial in thy effects, that erring heathens addressed thee with adorations, and mistook thee for thy maker ! —He, who filled thy
orb

orb with a profusion of lustre ; lustre, in its direct emanations, unsufferably bright ; but, rebated by reflection, delightfully mild : He, before whom thy meridian splendors are but a shade ; whose love transfused into the heart, is infinitely more exhilarating than even thy sweet and clear shining after the rain :—He divested himself of his all-transcending distinctions, and drew a veil over the effulgence of his divinity : that, by speaking to us, face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend, he might dispel our intellectual darkness :—His “ visage was marred,” and he became the scorn of men, the outcast of the people ; that, by this manifestation of his unutterable tender regard for our welfare, he might diffuse many a gleam of joy through our dejected minds : that, in another state of things, he might cloath even our fallen nature, with the honours of that magnificent luminary ; and give all the righteous to shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their father.

THOU moon ; that walkest among the host of stars, and, in thy lucid appearance, art superior to them all : fair ruler of the night ; sometimes supplying the day with thy waxing brightness ; sometimes waning into dimness, and scarcely scattering the nocturnal gloom ; sometimes covered with sackcloth, and alarming the gazing nations :—He, who dresses thy opake globe, in beaming, but borrowed silver ; whose dignity is unchangeable, underived, and all his own : He vouchsafed to wear a body of clay ; he vouchsafed to appear as in a bloody eclipse, shorn of his resplendent beams, and surrounded with a night of horror, that knew not one reviving ray :—Thus has he empowered his church, to tread the moon under her feet † ; and, inspired with the hope of brighter glory, of

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more

more enduring bliss, to triumph over all the vain anxieties, and vainer amusements of this sublunary, precarious, mutable world.

YE thunders; that, awfully grumbling in the distant clouds, seem to meditate indignation, and form the first essays of a far more dreadful peal; or, suddenly bursting over our heads, rend the vault above, and shake the ground below, with the hideous, horrid crack: Ye, that send your tremendous volleys from pole to pole, startling the savage herds*, and astonishing the human race: he, who permits terror to sound her trumpet in your deep, prolonged, enlarging, aggravated roar: HE uttered a feeble infantile cry in the stable, and strong expiring groans on the accursed tree:—that he might, in the gentlest accents, whisper peace to our souls; and, at length, tune our voices to the melody of heaven.

O YE lightnings; that brood, and lie couchant in the sulphureous vapours: that glance, with forked fury, from the angry gloom, swifter and fiercer, than the lion rushing from his den; or open into vast expansive sheets of flame, sublimely waved over the prostrate world, and fearfully lingering in the frightened skies: Ye that formerly laid in ashes the licentious abodes of lust and violence; that will, ere long, set on fire the elements, and cooperate in the conflagration of the globe:—He, who kindles your flash, and directs you when to fall, and where to strike; commissions your whirling bolts, whom to kill, and whom to spare: He resigned his sacred person to the most barbarous and provoking insults; submitted his beneficent hands to the ponderous hammer, and the piercing nail; yea, withheld not his heart, his very heart from
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* Psalm xxix. 8.

the stab of the executioner's spear: and, instead of flashing confusion on his outrageous tormentors; instead of striking them dead to the earth, or plunging them to the depths of hell with his frown; he cried—in his last moments, and with his agonizing lips, he cried, FATHER, FORGIVE THEM; FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO!—O! what a pattern of patience for his faints! What an object of admiration for Angels! What a constellation of every mild, amiable, and benign virtue; shining in this hour of darkness, with ineffable splendor and beauty! *—Hence, hence it is, that we are not trembling under the lightnings of mount Sinai; that we are not blasted by the flames of divine vengeance; or doomed to dwell with everlasting burnings.

T 3

YE

* One can hardly forbear taking notice of the disingenuous temper, and perverse taste of Celsus: who attempts to turn this most distinguishing and ornamental part of our Lord's life, into ridicule and reproach.—Having spoken of CHRIST, as despitefully used, and arrayed in a purple robe; crowned with thorns; and holding, by way of mock majesty, a reed instead of a scepter (for he enters into all these circumstances, which is very remarkable); he adds,—*Τὸ ἐκ ἐμὲ προσθεν, ἀλλὰ νυν γὰρ Θεῖον τι ἐπιδείκνυται; καὶ τῆς αἰσχυνῆς ταύτης πενυμένον εὐεταί; καὶ τὰς υβριζούσας εἰς σκευτὸν τε καὶ τὸν πατέρα δίκαιοι;* Orig. contra Cels. p. 81. i. e. Why, in the name of wonder, does he not, on this occasion, at least, act the God? Why does he not deliver himself from this shocking ignominy; or execute some signal vengeance on the authors of such injurious and abusive insults, both of himself and his father? Why? Because, HE was meekness and gentleness itself, whereas, Your deities were slaves to their turbulent and resentful passions. Because, They were little better than savages in human shape; who too often made a merit of slaughter, and prided themselves in spilling blood: but, CHRIST was the prince of peace, and came not to destroy

YE frowning wintry clouds; oceans pendent in the air, and burdening the winds: He, in whose hand, you are an overflowing scourge; or, by whose appointment, an arsenal * of warlike stores: He, who opens your sluices, and a flood gushes forth, to destroy the fruits of the earth, and drown

destroy mens lives, but to save. Because, any madman on earth, or fury from hell, is capable of venting his rage: But who, amidst such unsufferable provocations and barbarities; who, having in his own hand the power to rescue himself, the power to avenge himself; could submit to all, with an unruffled serenity of patience; and not only not be exasperated, but overcome, in so triumphant a manner, evil with good? None but CHRIST! None but CHRIST! This was compassion worthy of a God; clemency and charity truly divine.

Therefore, the calumny raised by the same virulent objector, in another place, carries its own confutation; or rather, falls with a weight of infamy on his dunghill deities; while it bears a most honourable testimony, to the majestic and invincible meekness of our Saviour,—*Συ μω, says he to the christian, τα αγαλματα τειων λαιδωραν καταγγελας ος αυτον γε τον Διονυσον η τον Ηρακλια παροντα ει ελοιδορηας, εκ αν ισως χαιρων απηλλαξας. που γε τον Θεον παροντα καταλεινοντες και κολαζοντες εδεν οι ταυτια ορασαντες πιπονδασιν*, *ibid. p. 404. i. e.* You, indeed, take upon you, to deride the images of our deities; but if Bacchus himself, or Hercules, had been present, you would not have dared to offer such an affront; or, if you had been so presumptuous, would have severely smarted for your insolence. Whereas, they who tormented the very person of your God, and even extended him with mortal agony on the cross, suffered no effects of his displeasure.

* Juvenal seems to consider the clouds, under this same character, in that beautiful line.

Quicquid habent telorum armamentaria cœli.

Sat. 13.

drown the husbandman's hopes : Who moulds you into frozen balls, and you are shot, linked with death †, on the troops of his enemies : HE, instead of discharging the furiousness of his wrath, upon this guilty head ; poured out his prayers ; poured out his sighs ; poured out his very soul ; for me and my fellow-transgressors : — that, by virtue of his inestimable propitiation, the overflowing of divine good-will might be extended to sinful men ; that the skies might pour down righteousness ; and peace on her downy wings, peace with her balmy blessings, descend to dwell on earth.

YE vernal clouds ; furls of finer air, folds of softer moisture ; he, who draws you, in copious exhalations, from the briny deep ; bids you leave every distasteful quality behind ; and become floating fountains of sweetest waters : He, who dissolves you into gentle rain, and dismisses you in fruitful showers ; who kindly commissions you to drop down fatness as you fall, and to scatter flowers over the field : — HE, in the unutterable bitterness of his spirit, was without any comforting sense of his Almighty Father's presence ; had not one drop of that sacred consolation, which, on many of his afflicted servants, has been distilled as the evening dews, and has “ given songs in the night ” of distress : — That, from this unallayed and inconsolable anguish of our all-gracious master, we, as from a well of salvation, might derive large draughts of spiritual refreshment.

T 4

THOU

† It is well known what terrible slaughter has been made by these missive weapons of the Almighty. Josh. x. 11. — But, the most dreadful description of this great ordnance of the heavens, is in Rev. xvi. 21. There fell upon men a great hail out of Heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent.

THOU grand ethereal bow; whose beauties flush the firmament, and charm every spectator: He, who paints thee on the fluid skirts of the sky; who decks thee with all the pride of colours; and bends thee into that graceful and majestic figure: at whose command thy vivid streaks sweetly rise, or swiftly fade:—He, through all his life, was arrayed in the humble garb of poverty: and, at his exit, wore the gorgeous garment of contempt: infomuch, that even his own familiar friends, ashamed, or afraid to own him, “hid, as it were, “their faces from him†:”——To teach us a becoming disdain for the unsubstantial and transitory glitter of all worldly vanities: to introduce us, in robes brighter than the tinges of thy resplendent arch; even in the robes of his own most immaculate righteousness, to introduce us, unblameable and unconfounded, before that awful throne, which the peaceful rainbow surrounds; surrounds, as a pledge of everlasting fidelity, and infinite mercy.

YE storms and tempests that vex the continent, and toss the seas; that dash navies on the rocks, and drive forests from their roots; He, who holds the rapid and raging hurricane, in streightened reins; and walks, dreadfully serene, on the very wings of the wind: He, whose breath rouses you into such resistless fury, and whose nod controls you in your wildest career:—HE went,
all

† Isa. liii. 3. כַּטְסֵתָּר פָּנָיו מִמֶּנִּי Fuit tanquam aliquis, e quo quisque faciem occultaret. He was as some flagitious and abandoned wretch, from whom every one, disdaining such a character, and disclaiming such an acquaintance, studiously hid his face.

all meek and gentle, like a lamb to the slaughter for us ; and, as a sheep before her shearers, is dumb, so he opened not his mouth :—Thus, are we instructed to bear, with decent magnanimity, the various assaults of adversity ; and to pass, with a becoming tranquillity of temper, through the ruder blasts of injurious treatment : thus are we delivered from the unutterably fiercer storms of incensed and inexorable justice ; from the “ fire, the brimstone, and the horrible tempest, which shall be the portion of the ungodly.”

THOU pestilence, that scatterest ten thousand poisons from thy baleful wings ; tainting the air, and infecting the nations : that leavest mighty regions depopulated, and crowded cities, even great and fair, without inhabitant :—He, who arms thee with inevitable destruction, and ordains thee to march before * his angry countenance ; to spread desolation among the tents of the wicked, and be the forerunner of far more fearful indignation : He, in his holy humanity, was arraigned as a criminal ; and though innocence itself, yea, the very pattern of perfection, was condemned to die, like the most execrable miscreant : as a nuisance to society, and the very bane of the public happiness, he was hurried away to execution, and hammered to the gibbet :—That, by his blood, he might prepare a sovereign medicine, to cure us of a more fatal distemper, than the pestilence that walketh in darkness, or the sickness that destroyeth at noon day : that he might himself say to our last enemy, “ O death, I will be thy plague ; O grave, I will be thy destruction †.”

T 5

HEAT,

* Before him went the pestilence, Hab. iii. 5.

† Hof. xiii. 14.

HEAT, whose burning influence parches the Lybian wilds ; tans, into soot, the Ethiopian's complexion ; and makes every species of life pant, languish, and sicken : Cold, whose icy breath glazes yearly the Russian seas ; often glues the frozen sailor to the cordage ; and stiffens the traveller into a statue of rigid flesh : — HE, who sometimes mingles you both, and produces a delightful temperature ; sometimes suffers you to act separately, and rage with intolerable severity : that King of heaven, and controler of universal nature, when dwelling in a tabernacle of clay, was exposed to chilling damps, and smitten by sultry beams : the stars, in their midnight watches, heard him pray ; and the sun, in his meridian fervours, saw him toil : — Hence are our frozen hearts dissolved, into a flow of divine love ; conscious of a deliverance from those insufferable flames, which glow in the infernal prison.

THOU ocean, vast world of waters ; he who sunk that capacious bed for thy reception, and poured the liquid element into unfathomable channels ; before whom all thy foaming billows, and floating mountains, are as the small drop of a bucket : Who, by the least intimation of his will, swells the fluid kingdoms, in wild confusion, to mingle with the clouds ; or reduces them, in calm composure, to slumber on the shores : He, who once gave thee a warrant to overwhelm the whole earth, and bury all its degenerate inhabitants in a watery grave ; but has, now, laid an everlasting embargo on thy boisterous waves ; and bound thee, all fierce and madding as thou art, in chains stronger than adamant, yet formed of despicable sand : — All the waves and billows of inexorable vengeance passed over HIS tormented body, and
afflicted

afflicted soul; that we might emerge from those depths of misery, from that abyss of guilt, into which we were plunged by Adam's fall, and more irretrievably sunk by our own transgressions: that, at the last, we might be restored to that happy world, which is represented, in the vision of God, as having "no sea †;" to denote its perpetual stability, and undisturbed serenity.

YE mountains, that overlook the clouds, and project a shade into distant provinces; everlasting pyramids of nature, not to be shook by conflicting elements; not to be torn by the convulsions of earthquakes; nor impaired even by the ravages of time:—He, who bid your ridges rise so high, and your foundation stand so fast: in whose scale you are lighter than dust; in whose eye you are less than nothing:—HE sunk beneath a load of woes; woes insupportable, but not his own; when he took our iniquities, and heaved the more than mountainous burden from a guilty world.

YE verdant woods, that crown our hills, and are crowned yourselves with leafy honours: Ye humble shrubs, adorned, in spring, with opening blossoms; and fanned, in summer, by gentle gales: ye, that in distant climes, or in cultivated gardens, breathe out spicy odours, and embalm the air with delightful perfumes:—Your all-glorious and ever-blessed Creator's head was incircled with the thorny wreath; his face defiled with contumelious spitting; and his body bathed in a bloody sweat:—that we might wear the crown, the crown of Glory, which fadeth not away; and live, for evermore, surrounded with delights as much surpassing yours, as yours exceed the rugged desolations of winter.

THOU

THOU mantling vine; he, who hangs on thy slender shoots, the rich, transparent, weighty cluster; who, under thy ornamented foliage, and amidst the pores of thy otherwise worthless bough, prepares the liquor—the refined and exalted liquor, that cheers the nations, and fills the cup of joy:—Trees, whose branches are elevated and waving in air; or diffused, in easy confinement, along a sunny wall: He, who loads you with a lovely burden of delicious fruits; whose genial warmth beautifies their rind, and mellows their taste:—HE, when voluntarily subject to our wants, instead of being refreshed with your generous juices, or regaled with your luscious pulp; had a loathsome potion of vinegar, mingled with gall, addressed to his lips:—that we might eat of the fruit of the tree of life, which grows in the midst of the paradise of God*; and drink new wine with him in his Father's Kingdom.

YE luxuriant meadows; he, who, without the seed-man's industry, replenishes your irriguous lap, with never-failing crops of herbage; who enamels their chearful green, with flowers of every hue:—Ye fertile fields; he, who blesses the labours of the husbandman; who enriches your well-tilled plains with waving harvest, and calls forth the staff of life from your furrows; he, who causes both meadows and fields to laugh and sing, for the abundance of plenty:—HE was no stranger to corroding hunger, and parching thirst; he eat the bitter bread of woe, and had “plenteousness of tears to drink:”—that we might partake of richer dainties, than those which are produced by the dew of heaven, and proceed from the fatness of the earth; that we might feed on “the hidden manna,” and eat the bread which giveth life, eternal life, unto the world.

YE

YE mines, rich in golden ore, or bright with veins of silver; that distribute your shining treasures as far as winds can waft the vessel of commerce; who bestow your alms on monarchs, and have princes for your pensioners: ye beds of gems, toy-shops of jealous nature, which form, in dark retirement, the glittering stone; diamonds, that sparkle with a brilliant water; rubies, that glow with a crimson flame; emeralds, dipped in the freshest verdure of spring; sapphires decked with the fairest drapery of the sky; topaz emblazed with dazzling yellow; amethyst impurpled with the blushes of the morning:—HE, who tinctures the metallic dust, and consolidates the lucid drop; HE, when sojourning on earth, had no riches, but the riches of disinterested benevolence; had no ornament, but the ornament of unspotted purity: poor he was in his circumstances, and mean in all his accommodations; that WE might be rich in grace, and “obtain salvation with eternal glory;” that we might for ever inherit the new Jerusalem, that splendid city, whose streets are paved with pure gold, and the walls garnished with all manner of precious stones*.

YE gushing fountains, that trickle potable silver through the matted grass: ye fine transparent streams, that glide, in crystal waves along your fringed banks: ye deep and stately rivers that wind and wander in your course to spread your favours wider; that gladden kingdoms in your progress, and augment the sea with your tribute:—HE, who supplies all your currents, from his own ever-flowing and inexhaustible liberality; HE, when his nerves were racked with exquisite pain, and his blood

* Rev. xxi. 19, 21.

blood inflamed by a raging fever, cried, I THIRST; and (O! unparalleled hardship!) was denied, in his great extremity, the poor refreshment of a single drop of water:—That we, having all sufficiency in all things, might abound to every good work here; and hereafter might be filled with all the fulness of God, and “drink of his pleasures, “ as out of a river.”

YE birds, cheerful tenants of the bough; gayly dressed in glossy plumage; who wake the morn, and solace the groves, with your artless lays: surprising architects, who, without rule or line, build your pensile structures with inimitable niceness; you have each his commodious nest; roofed with shades, and lined with warmth, to protect and cherish the callow brood:—But he, who tuned your throats to harmony, and taught you that curious skill; HE was “a man acquainted with grief,” and had not where to lay his head; had not where to lay his head, till he felt the pangs of dissolution, and was laid in the silent grave;—That we, dwelling under the wings of Omnipotence, and resting in the bosom of infinite love, might spend an harmonious eternity in “singing the song of “Moses, and of the LAMB.”

BEEs, industrious workmen; that sweep, with busy wing, the flowery garden; and search the blooming heath; and sip the mellifluous Dews: strangers to idleness, that ply, with incessant assiduity, your pleasing task; and suffer no opening blossom to pass unexplored, no sunny gleam to slip away unimproved: most ingenious artificers, that cling to the fragrant buds, and; with your nice inserted tubes, probe them to the very bottom; drain them of their treasured sweets; and extract even the odoriferous souls of herbs, and plants,
and

and flowers:—You, when you have completed your work; collected, refined, and securely lodged the ambrosial stores; and might reasonably expect the peaceful fruition of your acquisitions; you, alas! are barbarously destroyed, and leave your hoarded delicacies to others: leave them to be enjoyed by your very murderers. I cannot but pity your hard destiny!—How, then, should my bowels melt with sympathy, and eyes flow with tears*; when I remember, that thus, thus it fared with your and our incarnate maker†! After a life of the most exemplary and useful piety; a life, filled with offices of beneficence, and labours of love: HE was by wicked hands, crucified and slain: he left the honey of his toil, the balm of his blood, and the riches of his obedience, to be shared among others: to be shared even among those, who too often crucify him afresh, and put him to open shame.

SHALL I mention the animal that spins her soft, her shining, her exquisitely fine silken thread? whose matchless manufactures lend an ornament to grandeur, and make royalty itself more magnificent.—Shall I take notice of the cell, in which, when the gaiety and business of life are over, the little recluse immures herself, and spends the remainder of her days in retirement?—Shall I rather observe the sepulchre, which, when cloyed with pleasure, and weary of the world, she prepares for her own interment; or how, when a stated period is elapsed, she awakes from a death-like inactivity; breaks the inclosure of her tomb; throws off

* Canst thou, ungrateful man, his torments see,
Nor drop a tear for HIM, who pour'd his blood
for thee? PITT'S Poems, Octavo.

† No one, I hope, will be offended at my introducing, on such an occasion, creatures of so low a rank.
Since,

off the dusky shroud; assumes a new form; puts on a more sumptuous array; and, from an insect creeping on the ground, becomes a winged inhabitant of the air?—No: this is a poor reptile; and therefore unworthy to serve as an illustration, when any character of the son of GOD comes under consideration. But—let me correct myself. Was not CHRIST (to use the language of his own blessed spirit) “a worm, and no man *?” Did he not also bequeath the fine linen of his own most perfect righteousness, to compose the marriage-garment † for

Since, even the volumes of inspiration seem to lend me the sanction of their sacred authority. As they disdain not to compare the blessed JESUS to a door, a highway, &c. And, perhaps, all comparisons, which respect a Being of infinite dignity, are not only mean, but equally mean and unworthy.

I am sensible, likewise, that in this paragraph, and some others, all the circumstances are not completely correspondent. But if, in some grand particulars, the reddition answers to the description; this, I trust, will be sufficient for my purpose, and satisfactory to my readers.—Perhaps, it would be no mistaken caution to apply the same observation to many of the beautiful similitudes, parables, and allegories, used by our LORD; such as the brazen serpent, the unjust steward, the thief in the night, &c. Which, if scrupulously sifted, or rigorously strained, for an intire coincidence in every circumstance, must appear to great disadvantage, and lead into palpable inconveniencies.

* Psalm xxii. 6.

† This, and several other hints, interspersed in the two volumes, refer to the active and passive righteousness of CHRIST, imputed to believers, for their justification. Which, in the opinion of many great expositors, is the mystical and the most sublime meaning of the wedding-garment, so emphatically and forcibly recommended by the teacher sent from GOD, Matt. xxii. 11. A doctrine, which some of those who honour my meditations with a perusal, probably, may not receive with much,

for our naked souls? did he not, before his flesh saw corruption, emerge triumphant from the grave; and mount not the lower firmament only, but ascend the highest heavens; taking possession of those immortal mansions, in our name, and as our forerunner?

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much, if any, approbation. I hope the whole performance will not be cashiered, for one difference in sentiment: and I beg, that the sentiment itself may not hastily be rejected, without a serious hearing. For I have the pleasure of being intimately acquainted with a gentleman of good learning, and distinguished sense; who had once as strong prepossessions against this tenet, as can be well imagined. Yet now, not only admits it as a truth; but embraces it as the joy of his heart; and cleaves to it as the rock of his hopes. A clear and cogent treatise, intitled, Submission to the righteousness of God, was the instrument of removing his prejudices, and reducing him to a better judgment.—In which he has been happily confirmed, by the authority of the most illustrious names, and the works of the most eminent pens that have ever adorned our church and nation. In this number, are—bishop Jewel, one of our great reformers; and the other venerable compilers of our homilies;—Archbishop Usher, that oracle of universal learning; Bishop Hall, the devout and sprightly orator of his age;—the copious and fervent Bishop Hopkins;—the singularly good and unaffected Bishop Beveridge;—that everlasting honour of the bench of judicature, Lord chief justice Hale;—the nervous, florid, and persuasive Dean Stanhope;—the practical and perspicuous Mr. Burkit; and to summon no other evidence, that matchless genius Milton; who, in various parts of his divine poem, inculcates this comfortable truth; and, in one passage, represents it under the very same image made use of above. Book x. l. 222. I had almost forgot to mention, that the treatise intitled, Submission, &c. was written by Mr. Benjamin Jenks, whose book of devotions hath deservedly passed through eleven

YE cattle, that rest in your inclosed pastures; ye beasts, that range the ample forest; ye fish, that rove through trackless paths of the sea: sheep, clad in garments, which, when left by you, are worn by kings; kine, who feed on verdure, which, transmuted in your bodies, and strained from your udders, furnishes a repast for queens; lions, roaring after your prey; and leviathan, taking your pastime in the great deep: with all that climb the hills, or creep the vales; all that wing the firmament, or tread the soil, or swim the wave:—He who spreads his ever-hospitable board; who admits you all to be his continual guests; and suffers you to want no manner of thing that is good:—HE was destitute, afflicted, tormented; endured all that was miserable and reproachful; in order to exalt a degenerate race, who had debased themselves to a level with the beasts that perish, to seats of most distinguished honour; in order to introduce the slaves of sin, and heirs of hell, into consummate and everlasting bliss.

SURELY, the contemplation of such a subject, and the distant anticipation of such a hope, may almost turn earth into heaven, and make even inanimate nature vocal in praise. Let it, then, break forth from every creature. Let the meanest feel the inspiring impulse; let the greatest acknowledge themselves unable, worthily to express the stupendous goodness.—Praise HIM, ye insects that crawl on the ground; who, though high above all height, humbled himself to dwell in dust.—Bleat out, ye valleys; let louder lows be responsive

ven editions: and is truly admirable for the sublimity, spirituality, and propriety of the sentiments; as well as for the pathetic turn of expression, with which they are clothed.

five from the hills; ye forests catch, and ye rocks retain, the inarticulate hymn; for the great and good shepherd disdained not to be born in the stable, and, with frequent step, to retire into the desert.—Birds of the air waft on your wings, and warble in your notes, HIS praise; who, though LORD of the celestial abodes, while sojourning on earth, wanted a shelter, commodious as your nests.—Ye rougher world of brutes, join with the gentle songsters of the shade, and howl to HIM your hoarse applause; who breaks the jawbones of the infernal lion; who softens into mildness the savage disposition; and bids the wolf lie down, in amicable agreement, with the lamb.—Wave, ye stately cedars, in sign of worship, wave your branching heads to HIM; who meekly bowed his own, on the accursed tree.—Breathe balmy incense, ye blooming flowers, to the incarnate mystery; who, though his name be, Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty GOD, and the Prince of peace; yet vouchsafes to be called the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.—Pleasing prospects, scenes of beauty, where nicest art conspires with lavish nature, to form a paradise below; lay forth all your charms, and in all your charms confess yourselves a mere blank; compared with HIS amiableness, who “is fairest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely.” Drop down, ye gentle showers, and testify, as you fall; O! testify of HIS grace, which descends more copiously than the rain, distils more sweetly than the dew.—Let sighing gales breathe, and murmuring rivulets flow; flow, in harmonious consonance, to HIM; whose spirit is far more reviving, than the cooling breeze; who is himself the fountain of living waters.—Ye lightnings, blaze to HIS honour; ye thunders, sound HIS praise; while reverberating clouds return the roar, and bellowing oceans propagate

pagate the tremendous anthem: muteſt of creatures, in ſilent oratory diſplay the triumphs of HIS meekneſs; who, amidſt the moſt provoking inſults, was ‘dumb, and opened not his mouth.’—Great ſource of day, addreſs thy radiant homage to a far ſublimmer ſun; write in all thy ample round, with every lucid ſtream, O! write HIS praiſe; whoſe word, accompanied with his ſpirit, ſheds brighter light, and more exhilarating rays, through the mind.—Shine clear, ye ſkies; look gay, thou earth; let every creature ſmile: for, by the appearance of the ſun of righteouſneſs, peace is made with heaven, and joy come down to dwell on earth.—Angels and archangels, let your ſongs be of JESUS, and teach the heaven of heavens to echo with his honoured name: ye beheld him, with greater tranſports of admiration, when you attended his agony in the garden, and ſaw him proſtrate on the ground; that when you beheld univerſal nature riſing at his call, and ſaw the wonders of creating might: tune, tune to loftieſt notes your golden harps, and waken raptures, unknown before even in heavenly breasts: while all that has breath ſwells the ſacred concert, and burſts into a boundleſs peal of melody.

CHIEFLY, let man exalt his voice; let man, with diſtinguiſhed hoſannas, hail the REDEEMER. For man, he was ſtretched upon the racking croſs; for man, he was conſigned to the gloomy ſepulchre.—However different, therefore, in your age, or more different in your circumſtances, be unanimous in magnifying a Saviour, who is no reſpecter of perſons; who gave himſelf a ranſom for all.—Bend, ye kings, from your thrones of ivory and gold; in your robes of imperial purple, fall proſtrate at HIS feet; who forſook a nobler throne, and laid aſide more illuſtrious enſigns of
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majesty, that you might reign with God for ever and ever.—Children of poverty, meanest of mortals (if any can be called poor, who are thus enriched; if any can be accounted mean, who are thus ennobled); rejoice, greatly rejoice in God your Saviour; who chose to be indigent, chose to be contemned; that you might be intitled to the treasures, and be numbered with the princes, of heaven.—Sons of affliction, though harassed with pain, and inured to anguish, O! change your groans into songs of gratitude; let no complaining voice, no jarring string be heard, in the universal symphony; but glorify the LAMB even in the fires; who himself bore greater torment, than you feel; and has promised you a share in the joy, he inherits; who has made your sufferings short, and will make your rest eternal.—Men of hoary locks, bending beneath a weight of years, and tottering on the brink of the grave; let CHRIST be your support, under all infirmities; lean upon CHRIST; as the rock of your salvation; let his name, his precious name, form the last accents, that quiver on your pale expiring lips: and let this be the first, that lisps on your tongues, ye tender infants: remember your REDEEMER in your earliest moments: devote the choice of your hours to the learning of his will, and the chief of your strength to the glorifying of HIS name; who, in the perfection of health, and the very prime of manhood, was content to become a motionless and ghastly corpse; that you might be girt with the vigour, and cleathed with the bloom, of immortal youth.

YE spirits of just men made perfect, who are released from the burden of the flesh; and freed from all the vexatious sollicitations of corruption in yourselves; delivered from all the dreadful effects, of iniquity in others: who sojourn no longer in
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the tents of strife, or the territories of disorder; but are received into that pure, harmonious, holy society, where no ungenerous action creates outward irregularity, no suspicious jealousies breed inward disaffection; where every one acts up to his amiable and exalted character; where GOD himself is pleased graciously and immediately to preside.—You find, not without pleasing astonishment, your hopes improved into actual enjoyment, and your faith delightfully superseded by the beatific vision: you feel all your former shyness of behaviour, happily lost in the overflowings of unbounded love; and all your little differences of opinion, intirely overwhelmed in the tides of invariable truth: bless, therefore, with all your enlarged powers, bless his infinitely larger goodness; who, when he had overcome the sharpness of death, opened the gates of paradise, opened the kingdom of heaven, to all generations, and to every denomination, of the faithful.

YE men of holy conversation, and humble tempers, think of HIM, who loved you, and washed you from your sins in his own blood: think of him, on your silent couch; talk of him, in every social interview; glory in his excellencies; make your boast of his obedience; and add, still continue to add, the music of a dutiful life, to all the oblations of a grateful tongue.—Weakest of believers, who go mourning under a sense of guilt, and conflicting with the ceaseless assaults of temptation; O! put off your sack-cloth, and be girded with gladness: because, JESUS, is as merciful to hear, as he is mighty to help. Because, he knows your integrity, amidst all your failings; he is touched with the tenderest sympathizing concern, for all your distresses; and he lives, ever lives, to be your advocate with the FATHER.—Why then should uneasy doubts sadden your countenance? why should desponding



